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for Charlie & Hope
Maie
MAIE CASEY

from
20.12.65

Tides and Eddies



London

MICHAEL JOSEPH

Tides and Eddies

Winston Churchill during the last war used the words 'Watch the tides and not the eddies', though, as Maie Casey suggests, there is an occasional importance in an eddy.

Her second book covers a wide span of time and place, from 1914 to the present day. Such places as Cologne and Coblenz after the first world war, London, Canberra, Washington as the wife of Australia's first head of a diplomatic mission in the anxious years 1940-42, the Middle East where Mr Churchill appointed Mr Casey Minister of State, Calcutta in 1944-46 when he became Governor of Bengal.

Lady Casey brings to life an Australian curiosity and a fresh objective gaze. The threads of many-sided experience running through her book include aviation (Maie Casey is herself a pilot as well as an artist and poet), statesmanship and art in most of its forms. Her friends appearing in this autobiography include Cecil Beaton, some of whose photographs are among the illustrations, Dr Adenauer in his forties, the Churchills, the Roosevelts, Alexander Kirk, Field-Marshal Smuts, Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Nehru, Noel Coward, Lord Wavell and Misr.

Also by Maie Casey

AN AUSTRALIAN STORY

MAIE CASEY

Tides and Eddies



London

MICHAEL JOSEPH

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For Dick

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I would also like to mention with appreciation Miss Pat Jarrett of Berwick, Victoria, and Mr J. C. Patel of Calcutta, for photographs included in this book.

Finally I would like to say how grateful I am to Sir Winston and Lady Churchill for enabling me to name this book after a remark Mr Churchill made to my husband in 1943 'Watch the tides and not the eddies'.

Berwick, Victoria, Australia

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Nous sommes unique et nous reproduisons par la flamme, tantôt fils de Dieu et tantôt fille; toute notre histoire ne me sera révélée qu'avec le temps. Il me suffit de savoir que nous ne mourrons jamais, qu'en fait nous avons défense de mourir, pour donner à ma vie le sens de la Résurrection.

J'ai su, en étant toute petite, que cet oiseau de ralliement (le Phénix) était à nous.

Depuis le consultat de Paulus Fabius et de Lucius Vittelus, dernière date donnée par Tacite pour la réapparition du Phénix, il m'est arrivé bien des choses. Il ne m'est jamais rien arrivé d'inutile.

MARTHE BIBESCO

Livre I. La Nymphé Europe – mes vies antérieures

Prelude

I first went to England with my grandmother Sarah Sumner, my mother Alice Ryan, and my Swiss nurse Berthe Tissot when I was five but only three images remain of the months we spent there. This was due, I suppose, to my age and limited opportunities.

With Berthe I was left at Stoke Poges while my mother and grandmother moved freely in other places.

From the upstairs window of a tailor's shop in the main street of Windsor I watched Queen Victoria go by. I recognised it as an important occasion because I was wearing my best white dress and hat and my well-brushed ringlets fell over a crimson cape made for me by the tailor. Although the Queen was not dressed in queenly robes and looked small and dumpy and sad as she sat in her carriage I was caught up in the wave of excitement that rose from the street. It came less from the fact that she was a monarch perhaps than because her personality commanded attention and to those persons who were not newcomers, as I was, their respect and affection. I remember her even more clearly than I do my crimson cape.

The forest of Burnham Beeches near where we stayed I loved and feared as I walked, right down on the ground, with Berthe into the vast armoury of trees, their great trunks rising as the pillars of a cathedral, their leaves so strong and positive after the cunning lacy foliage of the Australian eucalypt. Whereas in Australia the emptiness and windswept isolation take away thoughts of human habitation, in England the air is enriched by the long occupation of men, the countless spirits that came and went and seem yet to remain in essence. Sound and vision and

scent and touch – sometimes we are aware of the extension of these senses into a field where they have no name. They stir within us, secret, supersonic, supervisual, superfragrant, supertactile.

The third image from that visit to England belongs to London. It was of a drive with my new-found Aunt Ada Scott in a hansom cab through deep yellow fog which we inhaled in thick sulphuric gouts.

There we were cradled together, swaying gently towards West Halkin Street in an almost noiseless world of our own, a stray light breaking through the fog, the muffled klonk of our horse's hoofs the only sound. Looking back it was good to have been with this loved aunt first in such an intimate way.

I think and write of her with delight, recalling her generosity, her humour and her commonsense, that rarest of the great virtues. Elsewhere I have described her as having something of the beauty of a gentle hawk; she had deep-set piercing eyes that would change in colour from green to grey to hazel.

She was my father's sister, Ada Ryan, who had married in Australia Admiral Lord Charles Scott and eventually retired with him to live in a part of Boughton House in Northamptonshire. Out of their kindness they looked after my brother Rupert when he came to school at Harrow and for many years his holidays were spent with them and their two sons Charlie and David.

It was told that the day Rupert arrived from Australia to stay at Boughton he was taken out into the park by Charlie and David and fooling about they threw stones at things till they came to a pond by the river. On the pond were a lot of coots and Rupert threw his first stone and killed a coot. The Scotts, remembering the famous Australian aborigine Billy who had thrown a cricket ball further than anyone else, thought he would do this every time 'so almost tried to persuade him not to throw stones at birds lest he decimate the bird population of Northants. But this throw had been an almighty fluke and Rupert never hit another bird, at Boughton or elsewhere'.

Years later when my mother brought me to boarding school in England we also would stay at Little Boughton, which was

Prelude

attached to an ancient ducal palace set solid as a rock beneath the shelter of a wooded rise. Boughton was a revelation to me after life in Australia. It was my real introduction to the English countryside. Small though England is there are many self-contained worlds within it, like so many islands. Each county has its own geology, appearance, boundaries, buildings, enterprises, loyalties, customs, lore, speech, its sense of continuity in family life and abode – in this continuity so unlike Australia where, restless people as we are, restless as the aborigine, properties and houses are continually changing hands.

Northampton appeared an open noble county. On the estate of Boughton miles of avenues of elms and limes ran through parkland and meadow; tall splendid trees regimented and as alike as guardsmen, impervious by their massed strength and dignity to the quirks of the seasons as to the noisy rookeries in their upper branches.

Nearby were the villages of Weekley, Warkton, and Geddington where the coffin of Queen Eleanor had halted on its way to London. At every stage of this last journey King Edward the First, her loving husband, raised a cross to mark the resting place of her body. The monument in Geddington, erected after 1294, has been preserved from the weathering of the years by its enclosed position in the village. It is an unusually beautiful triangular shrine where three female saints stand in niches under a spired turret.

While there were motor cars on the roads at this time we would still drive from and to Kettering railway station in a hired brougham which smelt like the potpourri of a thousand travellers. (Thinking of potpourri I am reminded of the fragrant blend that Aunt Ada, who was house-proud, placed round her rooms in Chinese bowls.) As we came to dips in the road over little bridges Aunt Ada told us that in Northamptonshire a dip was known as 'Thank you, Ma'am!'

I write of these innocent details because as a girl they gave me pleasure as they do still.

Not only was the landscape of Boughton strange to me; so was life itself. Because I had been virtually an only child I had no

knowledge of family life or school-boy humour, an omission that has dogged my days.

On Sundays the Scotts, their sons and my brother when they were there, would walk across the meadows to Church at Weekley or Warkton. When I went with them in the mornings I would think of all the feet, and the dutiful feet of children, that had trodden those paths. In the muted atmosphere of the afternoons the most active occupation of these young men appeared to be playing with Rupert's little black spaniel Dinah, 'the Bat-eared Dimosu from Nicaragua, the Staple Food of the Crocodile', and the feeding of their hawks which sat moodily about on their off days on their perches in the garden. Sometimes I was invited to enter, just, into the fellowship of falconers. I was allowed to walk behind, carrying the bag, in the case of the gos-hawk (The Old Fowl) a hare or a rabbit. But I was not encouraged to come nearer to hawks on fists than was necessary to smell them. According to Charlie they smelt, very faintly, of violets.

From my low range my Scott aunt and uncle seemed dissimilar persons though most happy in each other's company. Uncle Charlie, tall, upright, wore white whiskers; he was much older than she and he talked about facts rather than ideas though this may have been a protective habit of his generation. He had austere views about general conduct and the highest moral standards. Girls were seldom seen at Boughton except during the later periodic visits to the big house of the young and lively daughters of the duke.

John, Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, Uncle Charlie's nephew, was a powerful bearded personality whose mathematical, practical, navy-trained mind enabled him to control the administration of his vast estates in Scotland and England. He handled his great business with skill and energy, taking a sharp interest in the detail as well as the substance of his possessions.

As detail I could not help observing one curious discrepancy in magnificent Boughton. This was the vestigial approach to electric light. It had only recently been installed and had come in its simplest form. Strings of flex were to be seen hanging from noble

ceilings, holding at the bottom a small plate-like shade of vitreous glass above a naked bulb, like a spider at the end of its thread.

Duke John was extremely good to Rupert as he was to me. I liked him very much although he teased me, showing me yet another form of humour.

During my holidays I saw few persons and scarcely anyone of my own age. I had little to do but what I found for myself until Aunt Ada arranged with the housekeeper to let me into big Boughton, empty of living people though shadowed, stirred, scented by figures from the past. I heard sometimes the creaking of boards as they went into the distance, or smelt a momentary fragrance.

I entered into an unimagined familiarity with the masterpieces of painting that hung in that great historic house, wandering about in the high rooms and galleries to become acquainted with lovely and surprising things. I remember now that I would not have thought of it at the time that, until the creation of public museums in the early nineteenth century, palaces and private houses were the only repositories of the records of centuries of history through their portraits, landscapes, books, furniture and objects of use and beauty.

I tried to copy portraits with pencil or water-colour, for the impact of an occasional face is strong whether it is seen in life or in a picture. I was drawn to young faces, those of my own age, rather than to the more ravaged ones that hung on the walls.

One portrait was said to be of Mary, Queen of Scots, and I like to think it was. Her pearly face with high forehead shone above her rigid ruffled dress and on the canvas was painted the Vulgate version of the words of the Psalm, 'Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged' (Douay). The delicately rounded flawless face gave an impression of innocence but this was belied by the impenetrable dark eyes and subtle coral-pink mouth. A net of gold, set with pearls, was tangled with her reddish curls so that it was difficult to distinguish the head-dress from her shining hair.

When I revisit Boughton now from time to time and see again this painting I remember my early struggles to reproduce it faithfully. Mary, Queen of Scots, remains for me crystallised in

time as a young woman with a sad beginning and an unknown future.

Other pictures I copied were of Charles II as a boy and Master Ralph Montagu with his dog. One older face fascinated me. It was that of Queen Elizabeth. Her extravagant robe and head-dress were meticulously painted as were the hair-fine lines round her eyes and mouth which disappeared when one stepped back from the wall. I fancied also the portrait of Elizabeth Vernon, Countess of Southampton whose husband was the patron and friend of Shakespeare, combing her flowing hair with a white comb inscribed in black, 'Menez-moi doucement!'

On the ground floor of the palace, in a long passage, stood a carved stone chimney-piece bearing the dark words, 'Mille douleurs pour ung Plesur'.

The school of fifty girls I went to was St George's, Ascot where Winston Churchill had been earlier when it was a preparatory school for boys. I arrived there reasonably well equipped through the efforts of Miss Eliza Davidson who had taught me with the Mitchell girls, Hester, Nancy, Mary and Janet in our homes in Melbourne. She was a superb teacher, brilliant, stimulating, astringent, with the power to excite in her pupils an interest in almost any subject. She showed us how to organise our thinking, claiming that if anything was clear in one's mind it could readily be expressed in the written or the spoken word. Recently I came upon an old black exercise book filled with my compositions written at the age of twelve or thirteen. One was on Ghosts and the headings under the title read:

1. What Ghosts are.
2. Their uses.

Thanks to Miss Davidson's tutelage it was quite a convincing essay.

Eliza Davidson was a tall bony woman with lovely piercing grey eyes and a chin that would jut out in a frightening manner when she was about to slay one of us with a rapier dart of wit. I do not know what I would have done without her conditioning when I found myself in an English school. It was a shock as it was,

beginning with the realisation that few of the girls had any idea of Australia except as a penal settlement, that I was not expected to speak understandable English, let alone French, and that no one had envisaged our cities with trams or other facilities.

One of the two headmistresses and directors of the school was an auburn-haired Frenchwoman, Mlle Darius. She was a creature of great verve and presence who would sweep into a room holding a lacy handkerchief aloft in a plump white hand. Electrified by her we all tried to be gracious and 'distinguées' and to smile gratefully at anyone who opened a door for us. 'If you sit next to someone at a meal, mes petites!' she would say, 'seek to make them enjoy it. It will be your responsibility as women to make men happy. So you must begin now to be aware of other persons!'

Eighteen months at St George's did a good deal for me. I was not naturally obedient; Australians seldom are. I learned to restrain myself and to keep my mouth shut, helped by the mistresses and several girls who were individual and free-thinking. One of them was a descendant of Charles Dickens, Pearl Birch.

A splendid male figure visited us twice a month to lecture and set us tasks which he discussed and criticised the next time he came. He was Professor L. P. Jacks, Professor of Philosophy at Manchester College, Oxford. Tall, blond, slender, he was as exciting in his way as were Miss Davidson of Melbourne and Mlle Darius.

He gave us fascinating subjects to write about. One day after having ticked off M. Ryan for her impertinence in submitting an essay of less than a page on Euphuism I nearly fainted when he gave me A2 marks for it.

From St George's I went to Paris for a year where Mme Chevalier in Neuilly had the assignment of polishing some twelve girls from England, America, Canada, Australia. My French became worse and my Swiss accent increasingly anglicised.

The beauty of Paris was so overwhelming and many-sided that our day-to-day life was full of jewelled moments, outside or inside buildings. The time had not yet come for me when beauties of the world were to be interpreted by zealous escorts. As young girls we

Tides and Eddies

were permitted to look and think for ourselves, our dreaming minds untrammelled by experience or knowledge.

The history of Paris, strung together on the names of buildings and thoroughfares, seeped into us through the richness and diversity of these names of battles and events, of saints and individuals high and humble, of such haunting words as Val de Grace, Quartier de la Folie Méricourt, Simon le Franc, rue du Cherche-midi, rue du Trésor.

We were floated round L'Île Saint Louis in a summer haze. Here began a thread that was not to reveal itself for many years. A long time later I paid a visit on the northern tip of that tiny island in the Seine. Of this remarkable visit I will write later; as I arrived at nine o'clock of night, floodlights bathed in their white glare the great State and Church monuments that rose above the green ruffles of trees along the banks of the river, and touched them into exalted splendour.

Bateaux-Mouches, successors to those boats in which our girlish forms had travelled, flitted under the bridges decked with lights and I was back for a moment into my youth.

Then we sat with the gods at the Opera listening to Melba, Caruso, Rénaud. Someone observed of us 'Tout à fait comme un bouquet de fleurs, ces jeunes filles!'

The voices of Melba and of Sarah Bernhardt made our hearts stand still, so pure they were—deliberate, flute-like, not of this earth.

We were taken to see the sun rise over Paris as flower vendors brought their fresh blooms to the market, to stir the early morning air with their scent.

In an immense hall of the Louvre some of us listened to lectures on art by M. Reinach. I can still hear his rich persuasive voice which led us panting after it into those unknown fields.

We drank wine at meals, sometimes watered, *eau rougie*, and felt, or did not feel, that the French persons around us, with their rapier minds and their rapid speech and movements, were the kind of people we would have been happy to live amongst.

I will skip over our return, my mother's and mine, to Melbourne. I would have liked to go to the University but my parents

Prelude

who believed fervently in a good education thought this was going too far. In this they were supported by their friend and mine, Richard Rawdon Stawell, the physician whose brilliant sister Melian had become a wrangler at Cambridge and later had a temporary nervous breakdown. At that time not many felt sure of the capacity for endurance of the female mind. It was also thought by some that I was rather serious for my age and that it would be nicer if I got married. Alas I was not to do this for many years and my mother never knew that I married the son of her friend R. G. Casey.

Melbourne seemed a different place on our return. We no longer lived above my father's professional rooms in Collins Street, though Earimil on the Mornington peninsula where we had gone for so many years still belonged to my grandmother Sarah Sumner. Her house, Stony Park, in Brunswick was the one place in which no change could be found. There she sat in the loneliness of the very old, isolated from the present except in the moments of the endless visits of her daughters. Endless indeed, for she did not die until her hundredth year.

Earimil waited for us all in the summer but my cousins and I developed and thought of things different from those of our childhood and young men thought about us. We had many and new friends who rode with us in the bush and talked and talked. Earimil had not lost its magic; there was something about its atmosphere that kept us remote from human involvement.

ONE

War

(1914 - 1918)

Early in 1914 my mother and I sailed for Cairo where my brother was stationed as a subaltern in T. Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery.

In those days Australians travelled, outside their own continent, necessarily by ship and their destination usually was Britain. Their minds performed the extraordinary feat of leaping the wide stretch of twelve thousand miles that separated Australia from the British Isles, virtually unaware of the great populations and realms that lay in between. They brushed lightly on board ship and in the ports of call against persons of other races, observing them with detached interest and wonder, rather as they would have observed butterflies in a tropical setting, creatures outside their own background and lives.

Young Australians fell more readily into friendship with their contemporaries from India and Ceylon who smiled so shyly and offered to share their delicious foods. Some of these friendships lasted and came to life again many years later under very different circumstances.

On our meeting in Cairo we walked round each other almost as strangers, Rupert and I, with curiosity and the beginnings of affinity. Our liking did not seem to be based on family feeling or a shared background; I scarcely knew him for he had been out of Australia since I was six years old and I had seen little of him since. He was a legendary figure who had distinguished himself at Harrow and afterwards passed top out of Woolwich, breaking all records. So much was he a source of satisfaction and pride to my parents that my father would carry his son's letters around in his pocket to show his friends. I thought these weekly letters disem-

bodied and uninteresting. Poor Rupert had been so long away that he found few common topics to be shared so he would fall back on the weather.

Though I was prepared to be neutral because I had grown tired of hearing how wonderful he was, I had enough Ryan in me, as he had, to make me anxious to please. Our friendship grew of itself as do other friendships.

Rupert's personality was gay and good-tempered though according to our cousin Charlie Scott his lively blue eyes could become unexpectedly baleful. He was a short young man, compact, powerful. His strong hands however were capable of the most exact and delicate operations; the tying of almost invisible flies for dry-fly fishing, miracles of craftsmanship and patience, and the making of leather hoods for hawks, a pernicketty exercise in sewing and design. These smart little hoods, with a gap in front for the beak, were finished off by plumes rising from the top and were sometimes made brilliant by insets of coloured cloth. They were popped over the birds' heads and held in position by leather thongs that could be tightened or loosened by the right hand and the teeth of the falconer while the hawk sat on his gloved left hand. My brother's neatness of touch might have been inherited from his father, the surgeon, who no doubt sewed human flesh together with the same precision.

British army life in Egypt at that time was led in a water-tight compartment; it seldom extended into the rich and varied community around it. Rupert was one of the few who had French, Syrian, Turkish, Egyptian friends; in this he was thought rather peculiar. He was fascinated by Cairo, the spiritual capital of Africa, the great Oriental city whose disparate history was crystallised in so many superb monuments, whose streets held such a variety of human beings; and by the people of Egypt itself clinging to the banks of the river Nile, whose diversions were the resting place for countless birds. Here, too, in the delta hawks were flown from the fist.

Already an interpreter in French and German, Rupert learned Arabic and from that time I remember one useful phrase: 'Bukra

War (1914-1918)

fil mush-mush!' – or 'Tomorrow when the apricots are ripe!' They do not of course ripen in Egypt.

We moved from Cairo to London and T. Battery went shortly to Salisbury Plain.

A murder at Serajevo in Serbia, a small enough thing it seemed in a world of murders, by chain lightning touched off one event leading to another, until suddenly the world found itself involved in a war for which few countries were prepared.

My mother and I were in the small town of Ayr in Scotland at midnight on August 4th 1914. Only one happening in my subsequent life moved me with the same depth of horror as that proclamation of war. I was then reading *Thus spake Zarathustra* and though I knew little of Germany except the apparent mildness of Dresden there was an inhumanity in Nietzsche that seemed to forewarn us of a race of steely and obedient men.

Next morning, a fine clear cloudless morning, I heard a milkman whistle as he drove by. I felt that no one should ever whistle again.

Endlessly long those next years with shock on shock. Young relatives and friends disappeared one by one on active service, some to come back on leave once or twice and then no more. We were afraid to read the casualty lists in the morning newspapers. This was often the only way we knew whom we had lost.

I became a housemaid at 17 Park Lane in London, a hospital run by the Australian surgeon Douglas Shields in which the top floors were given over to war casualties. I crept silently under beds afraid to breathe lest my cleaning disturb the patient. From the ground I swept up pieces of skin fallen from a grievously wounded boy who was found also to have scarlet fever. I was put into quarantine and he was sent to an infectious diseases hospital whence as soon as he was able he wrote and apologised for having caused me inconvenience. He has been a life-long friend and in the second war was given for gallantry at Tobruk a third bar to his D.S.O. of the first world war. His name was Philip Myburgh.

After a year at Park Lane it seemed to my mother that I might be more usefully employed as a clerk so I volunteered for a job

with the Australian Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau under the aegis of the Red Cross. This Department was directed by an able girl, Vera Deakin, youngest daughter of the Australian statesman Alfred Deakin, her assistants Winifred Johnson and Lilian Whybrow, who was as young as Vera. Under them worked a motley collection of women of all ages, experiences and aptitudes and an elderly man or so. Voluntary workers are a race apart. They bring to their self-appointed tasks a special grace and devotion but I noted then that they were not always easy to handle.

The main task of the correspondence section where I worked was to reply to queries coming from anxious wives and mothers, giving them any details we could obtain about their men, in hospital or missing. The most tragic kind of letter we had to write, and we did this personally, was a general action report where we explained as gently as we could that in the stress of battle it was sometimes impossible to determine the fate of a missing man. He had simply disappeared. On some rare occasions these men did turn up in strange places and countries but so often they were never heard of again. The enquiries from the wives faded away in time but those from mothers seldom did. They continued to write to us, ever hoping.

Daytime was only one aspect of our lives. In the evenings we would look after those friends who were on leave or sick or lonely as were so many servicemen from far-away countries. More than anything most of them wanted feminine companionship, familiar comforts, some normal moments. There were young men of course who in their short spells in England demanded wilder times, excitements that could for a moment wipe away all thoughts of war wherever it lay for them, in air, on sea, all memory of the boredom and fear that for the infantry alternated in trench warfare.

They talked to us little at the time, or ever, of their life in the trenches. It was a secret world that like the world of prisoners-of-war might be re-entered only by those who had been contained in it. Sunk into the earth of Flanders and France their lives were hideous; sometimes passive, sometimes active through the violence of machine-gun fire and artillery. They were imprisoned

War (1914-1918)

for months of the year in the mud and clay of which so many of them were to form an enduring part.

The second world war was to be a war of movement; this first one took place for most combatants, Allied or German, against a static background that was to become un-nervingly familiar to those who escaped death or mutilation. In those long periods in the trenches there was time for thought, however, for knowledge and assessment of war and what it meant to human beings, those creatures so vulnerable in flesh and spirit. There was time for the making of poets. Wilfred Owen killed in action in 1918 aged twenty-five had written:

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.

Some men on leave became engaged to girls they scarcely knew and were never to see again; some married and lived precariously in heightened happiness.

There was the inevitable tug between girl and mother but unless there was true love in the girl she gave the son back to his mother for the last moments of his leave. One young soldier, Harold Keating, left this letter for his parents before his death in action:

'I write this on the eve of an attack as of course I may share the fate of many better men in it. There has never been a life lit by a more constant and zealous lamp of love than mine has been and what I owe to you no words or deeds of mine can ever express. Nor can I tell you of the happiness in which that love has enclosed me. If I do not return I would like you to think of me as the captain of my soul setting sail for some glorious El Dorado while the rising sun shines into my face.'

While my mother and I remained in London to be nearer to Rupert, my father Surgeon-General Charles Ryan, aged sixty,

sailed from Australia with the Australian Imperial Forces bound for Cairo and the Dardanelles. He was on General Birdwood's staff at the landing on Gallipoli on April 25th, 1915.

The Dardanelles campaign, conceived by Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, touched the edge of victory several times and even in its failure has remained one of the brave and imaginative events of history.

The Australian share in the action established our men, half trained and new to war, as superb partners in a joint enterprise. What they lacked in externals they made up for by individual initiative. It brought them into world focus for the first time. Before then, in the words of the Prime Minister of that day, William Morris Hughes, Australia had been 'a pleasant sunny back-water, a country where it seemed to be nearly always afternoon and usually tea-time'.

The short Gallipoli campaign ended in the evacuation on December 8th, 1915 on principles laid down by Brigadier-General Brudenell White, Australian Chief of Staff to General Godley of the Anzac Corps. The enemy was deceived and men, horses and guns withdrawn almost without casualties.

My father was invalided from Gallipoli with enteric fever and came to London from Cairo looking like a wraith. A few days after his arrival a burglar entered my mother's room at night in the Rembrandt Hotel. From next door my father heard her call and grappled successfully with him though he was armed, whilst I hearing from the distance a faint known voice ran to help. It sounded through my sleep like the cry of 'Tom' which was my father's special name for me. I clutched an unshaven throat with my hands which made my father say rather crossly, 'Leave him alone, Tom!' He was holding the burglar's hands behind his back. I then felt sorry for the man, he looked so small and scruffy.

My mother at the time considered the worst feature of the episode would be the tedium of explaining it afterwards to enquirers. She was indeed right. In the midst of great happenings small domestic ones catch the imagination because they are so much easier to understand. The hall porter of the Rembrandt

War (1914-1918)

Hotel would endlessly repeat 'He struck some Australians, he did, and they give him hell!'

Subsequently a fleet of Zeppelins was seen in the English skies. There was no radio then to warn us of danger though whining sirens were being developed. Many ran to blanketed windows to peer through chinks at these visitations; some even went on to roofs. In the converging search-lights over Hyde Park a long white cigar-like form could be seen floating soundlessly. As we watched another object appeared above it for a moment like a moth in the glare. The airship was brought down by Flt Lt W. L. Robinson at Cuffley where it slowly broke in two and descended in pyres of flame.

The pilot was given the Victoria Cross; he who brought down the second Zeppelin the Distinguished Flying Cross. In the line of diminishing returns it was said that whoever failed to bring one down as time passed would be cashiered.

My father (now Sir Charles Ryan) became Consulting Surgeon at A.I.F. Headquarters in Horseferry Road. He sat on a medical board whose task it was to pass men as fit for duty at the front, to recommend them to convalescent depots or for return to Australia. As he was exceedingly adroit at detecting malingerers he was accordingly feared though not I think disliked.

Nowadays it is accepted that persons under continuous strain must have sufficient breaks whether they seek them or not. In the services these are now imposed upon them, but at that time men were sometimes driven to death or permitted to drive themselves to death. At the end of 1918 many survivors of the war were at the end of their endurance and it took them a long time to re-assemble themselves.

The four years of the war dragged on underlain by the constant nag of personal anxiety, though seldom could fear of defeat be found.

America entered the conflict in 1917 bringing the strength of manpower and a freshening of effort that made possible the spectacular Allied drive of August 1918.

Tides and Eddies

When the fighting ceased in November peace came in a flat still way.

Crowds sang and danced by Buckingham Palace and in Trafalgar Square in an effort to celebrate. Most persons' hearts were sorrowful and they wanted to be alone. They mourned not only their own dead but that great army of young men who had been the flowering of their generation.

The injured body though grateful for the cessation of pain could not at once adjust itself to the future, nor could the mind foresee that the complex aftermath of war would be as demanding of faith and exertion as the war itself. The problems were to be greater than men's thinking.



Mary, Queen of Scots – Boughton House, Northamptonshire



R.G.C. and M.C. 1926

Mr Ramsay Macdonald and
Lord Thomson of Cardington.
1929



M.C. and Captain P. G. Taylor.
1938

Cologne

In the early years of the war Rupert had served with T. Battery in France. When it came to an end he was G.S.O.I. Intelligence, First Army. He had been given the D.S.O., the Legion of Honour and several other orders. As well he had fallen in love.

This, I believe, was the deepest romance of his life. She was the daughter of the Chateau where he was billeted near Sailly-sur-Lys. Eventually she married a Frenchman who had been destined for her if he survived the war.

Rupert was seconded from the Army in 1919 to become Commissioner for the Rhineland Inter-allied High Commission in Cologne, centre of the British Zone of Occupation. My parents returned to Australia and I went to Cologne to stay with him. As it happened I remained with him for four years with a short trip to Australia in 1920. I did not want at that moment to go, and wept so bitterly into my plate one night at dinner that Rupert promised to get me back as soon as possible to look after him. He had been away from his family for so many years that he had enjoyed the experience of knowing a sister at close quarters, as I did a brother. Our friendship had developed. We talked and argued endlessly; through our Irish blood we were a little alike but differed sufficiently for our relationship to have some bite, some flavour.

When I look back I feel a stirring of the old excitement of my first journey to Cologne, from the moment we stepped up into the Continental Express at a Belgian port in the dusk of the evening. During the night recurring waves of acrid smoke swept through the compartment, stinging the backs of our throats and covering us with feathery black smuts. The swaying of the train, the clanging of metal on metal, as varied in its rhythms as a piece of music, tended to lull our bodies into quiet but our minds were

active with excitement and apprehension. At some point in the night – at Aachen – the train screamed itself to a halt, lights brightened and compartments were invaded by big officials who examined passports, special permits and occasional luggage. For the first time we heard the sound of German voices.

Rupert shared with Otto Wolff, one of Germany's steel magnates, a part of his large house, 21 Worth Strasse, which looked out upon the Rhine at one of its most dignified though least appealing stretches. The house was grey and the wide waters that flowed by were grey also and forbidding. Only sometimes in the early morning did a warm glow rise from the river to express itself in golden lozenges that floated through the ceiling of my bedroom. They came from the stirring of the waters by a passing steamer carrying boys and girls who sang folk-songs in unison as the sun rose.

So soon was this after the end of the war that it was almost intolerable to find oneself in close physical contact with our late enemies. Rupert, with others in the Army of Occupation, had become accustomed to his surroundings before I arrived. He found the Rhinelanders an agreeable Catholic people closer in temperament to their neighbours in France and Belgium than to the more rigid Germans of the north-east. Perhaps there is always a difference that sets apart those who live by the banks of great rivers wherever they flow. The movement of water bearing its leisurely and varied traffic may of itself induce a tranquility of spirit in those who look out upon it.

Once again I found myself with Rupert in a setting where his interest outside his work might have been only with members of the British Army. There was reason for this. It required less adjustment; most persons at that time wanted to relax and enjoy themselves and not to look too far into a new environment. We indeed had British friends; some I would not normally have met who helped to change my life. But we had German friends also, directors of museums, professional men, artists, country people in the villages.

I learned to speak a rough and ready German, particularly useful when we went fishing along the banks of the small

Cologne

ravishing rivers that flowed into the Rhine. Rupert taught me to cast dry flies over trout and grayling. He was himself a remarkable fisherman, subtle and patient. He would return from a stretch on the river weighed down by a bag full of plump golden trout to madden me who had not been able to provoke even a rise.

One of our friends was Dr Witter, Director of the Kunstgewerbe Museum which housed some of the anonymous religious wooden statues dating from the 12th century onwards. The more beautiful of these carvings lost their anonymity to the extent of being attributed to the 'Meister von Osnabruck' or other masters who left their personal imprint on the materials they transformed; attributions more noble, more descriptive, less ephemeral than the names of individuals.

These wooden sculptures originally were coloured and traces of paint lay here and there in the creases of faces and garments. They were of the Holy Family, of male and female saints. The most intimate were those of Christ, almost life-size, astride a donkey which was mounted on a platform on wheels that could be pushed through the streets on holy days.

The city of Cologne was dominated by the magnificent Gothic cathedral set in the space of the Dom Platz, close enough to the Rhine for its high spires to be seen for miles from the eastern bank. One summer during the years we were in Germany, from an upstairs window of the Dom Hotel Rupert and I watched the great procession of Corpus Christi weaving its way from a distant street into the open square, to disappear in a chain of movement through the doors of the cathedral.

From the Catholic hierarchy of the Rhineland came prelates glittering in rich dresses, brilliant banners and crosses carried aloft, censers swinging, maidens strewing flowers along the path, the march of feet and murmur of voices making a frou-frou of sound as rhythmic as the humming of bees.

I had never seen or heard so beautiful, so gentle, a procession. Nor do I remember an interior as tremendous in its first impact as that of the cathedral when its towering walls drew the eye past the line of guardian saints in niches up into the vaults of the roof, there

to lose itself in a mist stained by the windows which rose as high as the vaults themselves.

There were constant performances at the Cologne Opera House, wonderfully sung and conducted, programmes unheard in most countries: *Toten Augen*; the operas of Richard Strauss, *Salome*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and the tremendous conceptions of Richard Wagner. We had Rhine and Mosel wines to drink between the acts to fortify us for what was yet to come. Till that time I had scarcely tasted wine and could have imagined nothing as delicate and scented as these.

In his contact with German officials Rupert saw a good deal of the Oberbürgermeister of Cologne (also a member of the Provincial Diet and President of the Prussian State Council) who had been invited after the Kapp Putsch of 1920 to become Chancellor of the Reich, an invitation he refused. The Oberbürgermeister's name was Konrad Adenauer and it is interesting to consider what influence he might have had on German history if he had gone to Berlin at that time. With the rise of the Nazis he disappeared into darkness for many years. In 1933 they suspended and then dismissed him from all his offices; in 1934 and again in 1944 he was imprisoned.

Hitler has been a long time dead. Dr Adenauer's greatly delayed rise to power is one of those strange stories of an individual who was able to transcend age, generation and events and to project himself forward into history.

When we first knew Dr Adenauer he was forty-three years old but he might have been thirty or sixty. He was ageless, a unique monolithic figure. Above a tall spare body rose a wide head with shaven hair. His face was unlike most German faces; it was more like that of a Mongolian with flat cheek-bones over which the skin was tightly drawn. He had bright inscrutable eyes and a charming smile. I liked him as much as Rupert did.

Recently I discovered several letters from him, the earliest dated 1920 addressed to Fräulein Ryan, others from the 1950's after he had met Dick. In January 1956 he had written: 'Ich denke manchmal zurück an Ihren leider schon verstorbenen Bruders, seine Klugheit und seine Fairness'. ('I think back sometimes to

Cologne

your unfortunately already deceased brother, of his intelligence and his fairness.’)

He wrote me again after his retirement from the office of Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. The writing in these later letters is as strong and exact as in the early one; there is no sign of hurry in them. The perception and sensitivity of this aged man are undulled; talking lately to an Englishman whose grip of the German language was only fair, Dr Adenauer abandoned the normal unwieldy German sentence with the verb at the end for short pithy ones shaped like English sentences so that his listener could not fail to understand him.

In Cologne a terrible disease was beginning to show itself, a disease hitherto little known. This was inflation and it was to worm its way into the lives of many Germans, destroying their security and the savings they had patiently built up over the years. Those who were young and active were able to live on the constantly rising number of marks they received for their work but older retired people were brought to the verge of starvation by the fall of the mark. Inflation was one of the most agonising aspects of our stay in Cologne and afterwards in Coblenz. We could not fail to be conscious of the lives around us touched by tragedy and hopelessness, of many persons carrying on with the small help they were willing to accept from relatives and friends who were wage-earners. We could see the flesh shrinking on their bones.

Some of them would come to members of the occupation forces through a mutual acquaintance, seeking to sell treasured family possessions, asking many marks for them, marks so unstable that they slid day by day nearer to the abyss of worthlessness. Beautiful and rare objects were thus offered to us for sums inconsequential in our currency which for so few pounds could buy so many marks. We could not give these elderly persons, doctors, professors and the like, the security they needed but we gave them more than they asked for and looked after their treasures faithfully. As I write I am in the company of some of these lovely things. The bust of a fifteenth-century wooden saint with outstretched hands, her heavy-lidded eyes which once were

blue now looking into the Australian countryside, Blanc de Chine and Sung vases, a carved mirror bearing on top the double head of youth and age.

How did Germany survive this galloping inflation? Dr Adenauer said of these desperate years after the first world war, 'It was the devotion to work of the German people that saved us'.

Another thread in my life began at this time and it has not broken though more than forty years have gone by. When I was a child I had heard my parents discuss Lawrence Hargrave and his experiments towards human flight. In 1910 at Diggers Rest in Victoria my mother had watched Harry Houdini, the magician of escape, leave the ground in the first powered aircraft to fly in Australia, a Voisin. The thought of flight lay at the back of my mind.

In 1919 a commercial air service, the Instone Airlines, began to operate between London and Paris and sometimes Brussels. One pilot was the entire crew and he flew such aircraft as the De Haviland 9a or 16 or 18, and the Handley Page 0/400. They held a range of from two to twelve passengers.

Early in 1920 I decided to fly to Paris and thence go on by train to Cologne. I knew of nobody who had tried this desirable experiment and in fact the passenger aircraft at that time would often travel half empty.

The excitement I felt on my first journey to Cologne sprang from the thought of a strange life amongst our late enemies. The excitement I felt on being airborne for the first time was a purer and more powerful emotion, the approach to a miracle. As the aircraft left the earth in a movement like the circling of a bird, I wept.

The pilot was F. L. Barnard and I flew several times with him subsequently, once as the only passenger when I sat beside him in the cockpit while he hopped over and under isolated cumulus clouds. There were few panel instruments in those days. Someone has since described them as being just a knife and a fork and a spoon. How early pilots managed to handle their aircraft in thick weather remains a mystery.

Cologne

When a pilot approached to land he flew his aeroplane to the centre of the field and descended from this fixed point in a corkscrew spiral to the ground while the earth appeared to the dizzy passenger to spin around the plane. This disconcerting technique was still used to an extent in 1960 by Russian pilots flying commercial jet aircraft.

In 1922 F. L. Barnard won the first King's Cup, flying at a speed of 120 miles per hour. A few years later he was killed in an air crash. His engine failed soon after take-off and he took the action he most of all would have damned in another – he turned back towards the airfield.

Another pilot I twice flew with was an attractive creature who wore a black patch over one eye. This did not affect his exact handling of an aircraft. He disappeared over the Atlantic Ocean in 1928 with his passenger, or maybe co-pilot, Elsie Mackay and was never heard of again. His name was W. F. R. Hinchcliff.

Coblenz

Rupert moved from Cologne to Coblenz in 1920 to join the Headquarters of the Inter-allied High Commission. He served under the first British High Commissioner, Sir Harold Stuart, that wise man from the Indian Civil Service, for a short time with Arnold Robertson (afterwards Sir Malcom Robertson) and then as Deputy High Commissioner to Lord Kilmarnock.

Coblenz had been chosen as the seat of the High Commission because of its central position in the territories occupied by the Belgian, British, French and for a while the American armies. It was also the administrative capital of Prussian Rhineland.

Though America did not ratify the Peace Treaty of Versailles it was represented by the command of General Henry Allen and for three years the Stars and Stripes flew from the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein on the east bank of the Rhine overlooking Coblenz. The American forces were legally outside the jurisdiction of the High Commission but through the tact of the French High Commissioner and chairman of the Commission, M. Paul Tirard, and the co-operation of General Allen, relations between the French and Americans were remarkably good.

General Allen, a tall virile majestic man, had the judgment and commonsense necessary to make a difficult position tenable. No nonsense was stood by him in his control not only of his men but also of the wives and young women, interallied as well as American, who came under his vision. When dances were held for his officers and soldiers the General, covered with decorations, would appear like a blazing god and call out, 'No Parking!' This order meant that cheek might not be pressed against cheek while couples danced.

When he felt that the evening had stretched itself out long

Coblenz

enough, whatever the time of night he would command the band to play 'Home, Sweet Home'.

At one New Year's party the wardrobe of the Coblenz theatre enabled two visiting American dignitaries to appear as aces in a pack of cards while General Allen became a Pope. On the stroke of midnight the bugles from the Ehrenbreitstein garrison announced the birth of another year and the guests formed a prancing cortege led by the pontifical robes of the General.

Paul Tirard summarised the United States occupation as gay and picturesque with a 'bon enfant' cordiality that created so naturally a sympathy for the American character.

Coblenz was smaller, more beautiful, more intimate than the great city of Cologne.

Built on the northern tip of a peninsula created by the break-away of the river Mosel from the west bank of the parent Rhine, the city was supported and softened by the woods behind it that sank steeply towards the Mosel. Between the high bulk of Ehrenbreitstein and the river Lahn lay another sweep of woodlands rising and falling in waves. These rises were a feature of the banks of the Rhine as far north as Bonn; they concealed villages that came suddenly to life at certain times of the year when bonfires were lit at the highest points to celebrate the Catholic festivals: Christmas, Easter, Michaelmas, All Souls, Candlemas. At night fires could be seen dotted about for miles, beacons of flames soaring upwards, burning bushes lighting the sky, more exalting even than the spires of churches.

The countryside showed an ordered beauty under the snow of winter as in the thick green of summer. For us it became filled with romance through the history of its people and the legendary beings who were their companions and creations, in the forest or on the islands and rocks of the Rhine. Even the deer and boar that lived in the woods seemed to belong to a fairy-tale.

(So different, all this, from the ragged unpredictable beauty of the Australian bush that stirred a deeper and more disturbing response. I remembered how startling were its lovely untidy

accidents shaped by powerful winds that altered everything in their path. scarifying and cleansing the air and the earth, even in its shielded corners.)

An aspect of our life in Coblenz was the variety of persons we met from different countries, with different appearance, dress, outlook, standard of behaviour.

One might sit at dinner between a Frenchman and an American, moving with the Frenchman not only into another language but into its related world. The French language opens gates that would scarcely seem appropriate to venture through in English and the landscape and mental climate through the gates are both natural and exciting.

On the other side at dinner, the American appeared at first approach rather similar to an Australian, fresh, direct, and enthusiastic, a quality that if it exists in the Latin races is deeply buried. This lack of enthusiasm, this kind of world-weariness amongst the old, sophisticated and experienced peoples, inevitably became a subject for discussion between our Belgian friends, Manu and Joseph van der Elst (recently Belgian Ambassador to Italy), the Frenchman, André Sagot, one at a time, and me.

None of them had met an Australian before; they did not think of Rupert as one since he had been conditioned by European influences. They found my direct outlook, which sprang like that of the Americans from the new world, unexpected when it was accompanied by an enthusiasm for a writer as profound and probing as Marcel Proust who was so much a product of the old world. It was wondered who would win if an Australian woman were to marry a Frenchman or a Belgian and live in his setting of tradition and convention. Would she lose her zest or would she increase his? There have been many mixed marriages and there is no one answer though I incline to think that most women would yield to the man's environment.

Some of the French in Coblenz believed that I was not Rupert's sister but his little Russian friend. My Swiss accent when I spoke French was thought to be flavoured with Russian and they could not understand why I wanted to go fishing on Saturdays or Sundays with him instead of spending the time in a more

Coblentz

mundane manner with them. It took the appearance of my mother in 1923 to lay this ghost.

Readers will no doubt have discovered that I was rather a prig. I met another, more mature, prig about this time and he greeted me with a cry of recognition. He was Lord d'Abernon, British Ambassador to Germany. His way had been prepared by Lord Kilmarnock who at the end of the war was sent to Berlin as Chargé d'Affaires to re-open diplomatic relations.

Lord d'Abernon might have been a model for one of Ruben's paintings of handsome opulent men: tall, heavy, bearded, rosy. He was one of those men who much enjoyed the company of women, and when I write company I mean no more, for those who want more do not necessarily seek a companion and a friend. He gave me some good advice about marriage.

This recognition of an likeness to some other person is instinctive and instantaneous. One may not at once realise which facet it is that will be shared but the recognition of similarity of thought and temperament shines out of the first looks that are exchanged. In such a way no doubt a Siamese cat knows another Siamese cat without having to look down on his own paws as a means of positive identification.

Rupert and I became closely associated with Lord Kilmarnock, his wife Lucy and their three children. My eyes are fixed on these as I saw them then: a gay and golden trio who expected and received affection if not always approval. Of two of them, their particular grace was lost too soon to the earth. One by murder.

Josslyn the eldest son was twenty-one when he came to Coblentz from the British Embassy in Berlin. He had already attracted the attention of older women by his physical beauty and vitality. His long blue eyes looked kindly on the world, his guffaw came loud and often. He was intelligent, brave and surprisingly domestic; one day, he shampooed one's hair, most thoroughly; the next, moved the furniture.

Many of us had horses, by the Rhine: I, an Arab mare that had come from the Hungarian Royal stables where mares were seldom ridden. Accordingly the beautiful chestnut was intractable

and opinionated. Imperfect as a slave, she was perfect as a mount with a mouth as light as a feather.

One morning I would go riding with Lord Kilmarnock, a dear man, a sensitive introvert who wrote plays when he could. He had the same long eyes as Josslyn, the same well-shaped hands but not his willowy grace or his panache.

Other mornings Joss, his sister Rosemary and I took our horses into the woods above the Mosel, woods with a hundred grassy tracks crossing under the high green boughs. If we lost our way in this exquisite maze, and how easy that was, we would drop the reins on our horses' necks and they took us home, turning here and there with pricked ears in a purposeful walk.

One day I rode straight down a steep bank and called to Joss and Rosemary not to follow as it was unsafe. But it was not in their character to leave a friend where there might be danger and they floundered after me bringing a stream of rocks as they came.

Josslyn was working for a Foreign Office examination in London but he was captured halfway through and married as her third husband Lady Idina Gordon (née Sackville) eight years his senior. She was a kind woman of charm and beautiful manners. They departed for Kenya eager and enthusiastic. He was happy while she gave him her full attention but this did not continue. He was happy also during the life of his second wife but she died in 1939 and he was left without an anchor. Anchored he had much to give.

The dark and ugly crime of murder should not have touched Josslyn, Lord Erroll – most ignoble for being committed at an active moment of war when he had returned to Nairobi from the Eritrean campaign in 1941. A black mark for the white settler in an African country. Josslyn was taken out in a car and shot in cold blood for motives of jealousy; his murderer was never officially identified.

Lucy Kilmarnock's great beauty had a fluttering nervous quality like that of a butterfly or a frilly flower. Her outlook was ultra-feminine, revealing itself in soft and flowing accoutrements and the organised disorder of her waving hair. She would look at

Coblenz

her daughter and murmur, 'Nice soft curls round your little young face . . .' and try to loosen Rosemary's golden helmet which Joss and I had decided should be arranged as simply as possible, the straight heavy locks to be drawn back from a central parting with a smooth roll on either side of her face. This suited her very well.

Rosemary was seventeen when she came with her parents to Coblenz in 1921, a lovely young creature, small-boned, slender, milk-white, frail. Her delicate face was like Josslyn's except that her blue eyes were deeper set. She was gentle, passive, and unexpectedly amusing. Like her brothers she could be an enfant terrible.

At a formal King's birthday dinner given by her father, Rosemary's clear voice was heard saying in a pause after the Scottish piper had circled the table playing 'The Road to the Isles': 'Maie says its blue for a boy, pink for a girl and mauve for a hermaphrodite!'. Lord Kilmarnock's eyes, usually so kind, reached towards me with malevolence down the crowded table, over the tinted wine glasses.

All that family, father, mother, children, were comfortable companions, so appreciative that they made other persons feel more interesting and better than they were. In some ways a fatal gift.

Josslyn, Rosemary, and the hard-working Gilbert when he was in Coblenz, spent much of their time in Rupert's house as a matter of course; and as a matter of course in 1924 Rupert and Rosemary were married. It was unsuitable in that Rupert was nineteen years older than she and for a long time too busy to give her the attention she needed. He tried to resist marriage but she was much in love with him and it came about.

In 1928 Lord Kilmarnock, then Erroll, for whom Rupert had a deep affection, died suddenly. He was buried in a high cemetery on the east bank of the Rhine where he used to ride and look down on the slow-moving river. Nearby was the grave of my mother who had dropped dead while staying with Rupert in October 1923, on so wild a night that our solid German house trembled as though it were built of weather-board. (How often as

Tides and Eddies

the years move throughout the world towards their ultimate seasons of winter and summer has the strength of wind, wild and urgent, caused the human spirit to falter, to strain against its moorings towards escape?)

Rosemary went to England with her mother and her little son. Eventually the marriage fell to pieces because circumstances separated her from Rupert and I, whose friend she was, married and went out of the picture.

London

When Rupert and I lived in his Cologne house Otto Wolff and I used to meet occasionally on a stairway that was agreeably hung with etchings by Max Klinger. He gave me for Rupert a red Alsatian police dog named Luchs (lynx), charming, obedient, and so well-trained that he not only opened doors by depressing their brass handles but closed them after him in a slightly more destructive manner. He had a large German vocabulary and seldom made a mistake in instruction.

Perhaps it was Luchs who first brought Lady Kitty Vincent, then wife of Lt-Colonel Berkeley Vincent, and me together. She loved dogs and was learning to train Alsations at the German Police Depot. (It was she who years later observed of our first child, her god-daughter Jane, 'Good bone and not shy!')

After my mother's death she and I shared a flat at 40 Buckingham Gate in London. We occupied it in fits and starts, sometimes together, sometimes separately, in an enjoyable relationship where we both came to know each other's friends and relatives as voices on the telephone. Aunt Alice, Aunt Ada and so on. Not often did a voice materialise as part of a human being but the bridge of sound in itself brought about a kind of astral friendship.

Kitty, later Kitty Ritson, came from a unique mould. She was unusual by her turn of mind and tall physical elegance. Her arms and hands were as beautiful in colour and texture as they were in form; they suggested warm ivory. Her eyes were long, slanting, full of laughter. She wrote books and was at that time working on one to be called *The old order changeth*. She contributed also a lively column in the weekly *London Mail* over the name of Miaou. When she was away this task was sometimes undertaken by her mother Mabell, Lady Airrie, who, described as Grandmama

Miaou, showed as much ingenuity and humour as did her daughter.

For my own pleasure I must now re-enter the little flat, the first dwelling I had furnished, taking myself back into a place designed to create a world of its own, one that would withstand the soot-laden air and fogs of winter and emerge in the brilliance of spring looking bright and unshabby. Nothing in it was flimsy, nothing pale.

The flat consisted of a long narrow passage to which the rooms were attached. the larger ones at each end, the smaller on a side looking out towards a blank brick wall. The mullioned windows of the sitting-room, curtained by a Chinese design in viridian green and yellow, opened on to the thin stretch of Buckingham Gate. The walls of the room were painted a colour I thought of as 'Chinese brick'. I had never seen one but my imagination turned it into a blend of the powdery texture and shade of an apricot, and pink lilac. Persian rugs borrowed from Rupert made splashes of rose-red and saffron on the polished floor.

The bedroom where I slept was deep turquoise, warm enough to offset its dreadful outlooks – the main one into a light well of St James's Court. By a strange coincidence the flat whose windows looked towards mine was inhabited by someone who became a friend.

It was now five years after the end of the war. Many of us were aware that a barrier had risen between those who had been in the war and those who were too young. This barrier was a rejection by younger persons of anything to do with it. They felt resentment that the war had been permitted to happen; resentment in many cases of all it had taken from them. Unconsciously, like something gnawing away unseen and not recognised for what it was, lay also a feeling that they had been denied a tremendous many-sided experience, however ghastly. There are human beings who long for what they have never had, some event or way of living that takes shape in their imagination and can never be resolved, whether it be good or bad. In the case of young persons they become affected by an inverted form of jealousy.

I, who had known Rupert's friends in the Rhineland, tended to

London

find older persons more interesting because they were experienced and presumably had a deeper understanding of life.

On leaving Germany several servicemen turned their minds towards politics, spurred by their anxiety over the harsh peace treaty of Versailles and its probable effect on the future of Europe.

Of those who were our friends one entered the House of Commons as a Conservative, another as a Liberal. I listened to debates from a long way off, up under the roof of the Chamber, ate meals in the Members' Dining-room which I was sometimes to share with men of particular interest: Lloyd George, whose every hair of mane and moustache sprouted with individual vigour, whose every tone of voice charmed by its musical rise and fall; Alfred Mond, a spearpoint of the Zionist movement then but a dream, whose tremendous head was like a stone carving by Epstein.

My Liberal friend was fond of a service colleague who had unsuccessfully contested a seat for Labour. He was Christopher Birdwood Thomson, Brigadier-General in the Royal Engineers, afterwards Lord Thomson of Cardington. I cannot better introduce him to the reader than by quoting two poems and notes on them from Lord Wavell's Anthology *Other Men's Flowers*:

How can she catch the sunlight and bind it in her hair?
Where is the golden apple whose core is not despair?
How shall one cull the honey and yet not rob the flower?
And how can man, being happy, still keep his happy hour?

Notes by A. P. Wavell:

"These lines were written by a friend of mine, the late Lord Thomson of Cardington who was killed in the disaster to the R.101. We did the Staff College Course together and were good friends until his death. C.B. was one of the most amusing companions I have had; a genuine socialist in principle, a confirmed sybarite in practice; a good and witty talker on all subjects, with much skill in the French tongue, in the choice of wines and food, in the blandishment of fair ladies. He never wrote other poetry as far as I know and I never saw these lines in print. He quoted them to me one day and they have stayed in my head to remind me of a gay and gallant friend.

"I was once walking down Piccadilly with him on the night of a full

Tides and Eddies

harvest moon. C.B. warmed by a good dinner and good wine was speaking in a poetical strain of the moon when a lady of the night accosted him. He paused, pointed to the moon, and addressed the lady in the following words. With one horrified glance she fled:

You meaner beauties of the night
That poorly satisfy our eyes
More by your number than your light
You common people of the skies;
What are you, when the Moon shall rise?

(From *On His Mistress, the Queen of Bohemia*, by Sir Henry Wotton.)”

C.B. had begun to take shape in my mind as a knightly man of unusual attraction so it was arranged that we should meet at a dinner for three given by the Liberal M.P. It took place at the Café Royal in the majestic upstairs room, made lively as well as splendid by gilded mirrors and warm balloons of light hanging from the crimson walls and high ornamented ceilings.

How important to the human face is light! Sometimes we do not recognise a person, not because he is in a different setting but because we see him in a different light. His appearance varies as much through the changing moods of the day as does a landscape with the sun overhead from its masking by the long shadows of evening. His face too is sharpened or veiled, heightened or diminished by the angles of the beams of the sun. By nightfall, in artificial light, he is again changed and his face takes on a different character, until the time is reached – the time of today – when he can be over-defined, over-revealed, destroyed, by a static inhuman glare.

But not yet were fluorescent strips of white light stretched above the head to drain the flesh of its colour and reveal its hollows and creases with the pitiless clarity of an operating theatre. Therefore my companions looked to me very handsome and healthy as they sat in a rich atmosphere created by a combination of animated talk with the bouquet of newly poured wine and the smoke of distant cigars and Turkish cigarettes.

C.B. was tall, elegant, slightly stooped, with a head as finely

drawn as a cameo and delicate hands whose fingers turned up at the tips. He had a particularly attractive speaking voice, low and resonant.

In the twenties the personnel of Labour politicians was largely composed of men from the working classes; the aristocratic intellectual was not as readily accepted by the party machine or by the voters as he is now. The cultured C.B. Thomson was undoubtedly looked upon with some suspicion. He had however one great friend – Ramsay Macdonald, the first Labour Prime Minister and the virtual creator of the British Labour Party. As C.B. had failed to win a seat in the House of Commons Ramsay Macdonald, who felt the need of his services and advice, nominated him for a peerage. He entered the House of Lords in 1924, one of the first Labour peers, as Lord Thomson of Cardington and became Secretary of State for Air.

In spite of his gift for friendship and his attraction as a companion for men and women alike C.B. was in some ways a lonely man. He lived in a small flat in St James's Court whose windows looked towards mine. When I first knew him he was working on his third book, *Smaranda*, a collection of sketches preceded by the longer story of the title, written in diary form of his experience as Military Attaché and Chief of Military Mission in Roumania in 1915–16, and of his friendship with the beautiful and gifted Princess Marthe Bibesco, wife of the airman Prince Georges Bibesco. He would read to me from this material, altering passages as he read, ironing them out and polishing as writers do when the written word is both seen and heard – tested by eye/ear. We went to concerts together and dined sometimes at the Ritz, not exactly frugally but thoughtfully. We walked in St James's Park by the long lagoon and watched the birds that, like the domestic animals in England, are very comfortable with human beings. (So bold are they that I, once again in transit through the places as through the years, saw yesterday two glossy ducks waiting by the lift in the lobby of 73 St James's Street. And who would expect to hear two crows, seated on the summits of flagpoles, cawing to each other in the dusk across the dying traffic of St James's Street?)

When I stood looking on in the park with C.B. he would refer to what he described as my 'Australian stance': legs a little apart and feet parallel to each other.

With head thrown back as he walked, gazing towards the sky, he spoke of books, of Anatole France's *Thais*, and the image of the lovely creature, wearing a robe of silver cloth and round her fair head a wreath of pale violets, has stayed in my memory. He told me of his visit to Russia and meetings with Lenin who he said was henpecked. I walked past Lenin thirty-six years later as he lay embalmed and flood-lit in a Moscow sanctuary and he did indeed appear a mild little man, dressed in formal black clothes. Unlike most figures in death, his hands, like those of his companion Stalin who was soon to disappear from his catafalque, were not joined together but lay by the sides of his body.

C.B. talked of the future of socialism and the world of politics, of international affairs and the extent to which they might be affected by the talks at Versailles and the Treaty signed there. At that time he had been with the Supreme War Council.

C.B. believed, as far as Britain was concerned, that the three fighting services should be co-ordinated under a Minister of Defence. As I write nearly forty years later this has just come about.

He spoke of Marthe Bibesco's gifts as a writer which I discovered for myself but not, I cannot think why, until many years later when I read several of her books beginning with the earliest, *Les Huit Paradis* and *Alexandre Asiatique*. Fascinated by their beauty I wrote to her.

It was she whom I visited by illuminated ^{light} in the apartment at the northern tip of L'Île Saint Louis, in 1960. As I climbed nervously up the circular stairway I wondered what kind of a woman she was whom I was going to meet, this beloved almost legendary figure C.B. had spoken of in the twenties. I wondered what she would think of me. By this time I had begun to know her through her books and some remarkable letters she had written me, but for her I was someone more dim, an unknown out of a new world far removed from her world whose roots went so deep into a known past and civilisation.

Entering her salon, perched high on the island point like the rising prow of a ship, I saw an ivory-skinned woman wearing a long black dress and a white chiffon scarf tied loosely over her head.

She spoke English in a manner particularly her own, showing the same mastery of words and shades of meaning, of human understanding, the same flair for the unexpected, that distinguished her writings. But her words took on an added attraction when they were uttered in a low musical voice with the occasional hint of translation. I watched her fine petal-like fingers stressing the points of her speech.

We came together as the friends of a friend – a conjunction. Now to my delight we are ourselves friends. She has written that falling out of friendship would be ‘a state of affairs worse than falling out of love, because love has no law – and the choice of a friend implies that one is responsible, such feelings being either a response or nothing, and to be lawless or disconnected towards a friend is losing that friend by our own grievous fault’.

In her book *Au Bal avec Marcel Proust* Marthe refers to ‘survival in the fight against oblivion, the confessed or secret goal of all human effort’.

Deeds or events that crystallise individuals ensure a form of immortality. But much, particularly of good, is forgotten. Therefore each one of us who remembers friends and puts on paper for one of them some tribute of affection and respect – a humble personal offering – has the hope that those words may survive to bring that person to life for a moment to the stranger who reads them. In our library recently I came across a book one hundred and fifty years old. Out of it fell a pressed flower and I felt a small physical stab at the sight of it. I thought of the reason for its being there, some human reason, and as I put the flower carefully back it seemed that my hand was touching a living past.

Marriage

In the early twenties I went one afternoon to the wedding of an Australian who was in the British Diplomatic Service. His best man was another Australian, R. G. Casey, whose father of the same names had been a friend of my mother's. I knew him slightly.

As we happened to be standing together at the reception afterwards he said to me casually 'When we are married, we won't have all this schemozzle, will we?' I looked at him sharply but he appeared to be neither facetious, nor pressing. Merely matter-of-fact.

Dick Casey was at this time Liaison Officer in London between the British and Australian Governments with an office in ('in' but not 'of') Sir Maurice Hankey's at 2 Whitehall Gardens, the office of the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Cabinet office, a building since replaced. His task was to keep the Australian Prime Minister (Mr S. M. Bruce later Viscount Bruce of Melbourne) informed on anything and everything that might affect Australia in the fields of foreign affairs and defence.

This appointment was brought about through an episode in 1922 when Mr Lloyd George, then British Prime Minister, came close to war with Turkey without informing the Dominions which at that time might well have been involved with Great Britain in any conflict. Mr Bruce was so angry at this lack of consultation that he decided the time had come for Australia to develop its own Department of External Affairs. Accordingly he asked that a senior officer of the British Foreign Office might be sent to Australia and Allen Leeper, who was himself an Australian in the Foreign Office, came to Melbourne to advise on the setting up of such a department and service. Two initial appointments

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were made subsequently; one to operate from the seat of the Federal Government in Australia, one from London. Dick Casey was chosen for the London post.

Dick and I were not anxious to tie ourselves up. Both of us were over thirty and there is no doubt that the longer one resists matrimony the more difficult it becomes to accept its ties and obligations. We had many things in common, some that belonged to our Australian background and outlook. We had the desire to serve Australia and the concept of the Commonwealth.

He had been involved in the war without let-up since the landing on Gallipoli, and in France in 1917-18 served as Brigade Major to the 8th Australian Infantry Brigade. When war ended he came to London smelling smells where there were none – the death of men still in his consciousness. He was a serious shy sensitive man although he could be most amusing, with a salty humour drawn from Ireland by way of Australia. He had a fertile imagination and the ability to improvise. Also, it must be said, he was vigorously good-looking.

But there is another factor that has a particular appeal for some of us – the sound of the human voice. There are certain voices that bind us in love and friendship by qualities that are difficult to analyse. We hear them with recognition, not only of their special sound but of their content. We are held in thrall by them. I liked Dick's strong resolute voice, that increased in speed as his interest rose, as I have liked the voices of all those persons who have been important in my life.

Early in 1926 I travelled, free as a lark, with my father to Spain and Morocco – an expedition of much interest but a story too long to tell here. We returned to London the day the general strike ended, at a time also when the Zinoviev letter was beginning to inject itself into politics to the absorbed and critical attention of C.B.

C.B. had once said 'Marriage is only possible when it is irresistible'. Neither Dick nor I would easily have admitted this at the time as we only just managed to meet at the altar after a ten days' engagement. But this was in fact true for both of us.

My father was delighted at the idea of my marrying Dick Casey. He had known him on Gallipoli and had spoken of his courage and capabilities before I was aware of these myself.

My parents were unusual if not unique in never having shown noticeable interest in whether I married or not. Sometimes a suitor would approach my mother to ask for my hand, a gesture she thought old-fashioned. She would reply that it was no use asking her; that I appeared to know my own mind and that I alone could make so personal a decision. Some of my friends she clearly liked better than others but she did not seek to discuss them with me. She was a rare, reserved woman who never impinged on another human being unless she felt it imperative. She respected my privacy as she did Rupert's.

We are not early aware of continuity in the chain of family history. I knew my mother better than my father because there is an instinctive understanding between members of the same sex. Their minds work in the same way, their problems are similar; they are fortified by the same age-old experience. I had been selfish towards my mother and self-absorbed. When she died, those qualities I had admired in her, without having any desire to develop them in myself, suddenly became important. They formed a cloak that I drew tightly around me for strength and security. I began to think of myself as the next link in the chain.

One of my Scott cousins spoke thus of my mother's death: 'She had done her work on you'.

During the ten uncertain days before marriage I was escorted down Bond Street to buy a wedding dress by my father and Admiral Evans who had recently held an appointment in Australia. In the window of Fenwicks I saw a dress that charmed me. It was made of black taffeta with an immense white organdie collar and cuffs edged by black. My two escorts also thought it beautiful and appropriate. We went in; I tried it on to their shining approval and walked out with it.

We were married in the morning at St. James' Piccadilly on Midsummer Day 1926. As I arrived – not wearing my beautiful black dress but a light-coloured one I had been forced into by women friends – my father was making a luncheon engagement

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by the Church entrance. The clergyman beside him said rather irritably that the Church was full and we must hurry as he had another wedding after ours. Though Dick and I had tried to adhere to his original idea for 'no schemozzle' this was not to be; partly because both my father and Dick's mother were sociable persons who invited everyone they ran into for days before, and partly because Dick's friends at the Foreign Office and the Cabinet Office came in force to see us married and to wish us well from Jules' restaurant opposite the Church, to the accompaniment of caviar and champagne.

I do not remember seeing Dick at the reception, nor do I remember any speeches. This was in fact the day of my father and Dick's mother. My sister-in-law Gwynnedd Casey tells that she sat between them in the Church holding first one hand then the other while they both wept unrestrainedly. My father was one of those men who, like Winston Churchill, was not embarrassed by his tears. He seemed unconscious of them. At this time he was a short compact man of seventy, inclined to be fat. His massive bald head was trimmed by a fringe of curling white hair and he had a small spirited moustache; his strong features were dominated by eyes of startling turquoise blue.

Mrs Casey, Dick's mother, so like my father in her love of people, was also a warm-hearted impetuous extrovert. She was a tall woman of much beauty with blue-grey eyes set in a fringe of straight black lashes; she was a little bent now. Since her husband's death in 1919 she constantly travelled the world leaving a trail of fond admirers in place after place, persons of all ages whom we afterwards ran across from time to time, to become enclosed in the aura of her popularity. There were two Mrs R. G. Caseys then but nobody could have replaced the first one.

Because of her warmth of character and belief in human beings Mrs Casey was a dedicated match-maker. She had however no hand in ours though she accepted it with pleasure and relief as she had known and respected my parents and in the hurly-burly of life in London had feared for the future of her handsome eldest son.

A year after marriage we returned to Australia for a few months

so that Dick could report to the Prime Minister, and move the young Department of External Affairs from Melbourne to Canberra.

We tried to fly back to London in 1927 but except for our flight in an ex-first-war D.H.9 (belonging to Western Australian Airways inaugurated by Norman Brearley) from Perth to Derby in north-west Australia, this was not yet possible. There were a few fragmentary airlines operating short routes here and there in the world but no co-ordinated services. Permission to fly over countries on the path from Australia to Europe was unpredictable.

This, my first long flight of 1,450 miles, was even more primitive than those made in 1920. The two of us were packed in with crates of day-old chicks to be delivered at landing places along the route: Geraldton, Carnarvon, Onslow, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby.

Our pilot, Eric Chater, did everything else as well as pilot and navigate his slow aircraft whose engine was always on the point of overheating. Between Perth and Geraldton Dick observed streaks of oil flowing darkly along the fusilage, so we returned to Perth to pick up another plane.

Many coast lines are beautiful but none more dramatically so than that of Western Australia in its northerly sweep. Over Hamelin Pool and Shark Bay ribbons of strand edged by the lace of foam shield the land from encroachment by the enamelled waters of the Indian Ocean, and outline the offshore islands of Dirk Hartog and Dorré and Bernier.

At Port Hedland we landed on the evening of the dentist's wedding. In the early morning Eric Chater, stepping softly between the exhausted bodies of the guests on the verandah, called us with nicely balanced cups of tea.

Broome was then the centre of the pearling industry operated by indentured Japanese divers. Most of the trade lay in pearl shell for buttons but there were occasional finds of large pearls in the oysters, which are the biggest in the world. Rosenthal of Paris had a depot in Broome where a highly skilled Singalese examined fine pearls to consider whether any of them, like onions, might be improved in radiance by the delicate removal of a skin or so.

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The cattle port of Derby, sunk in the calm of King Sound, was edged with dark swamps of mangroves. In the shifting tide of thirtyfive feet daily the trees either rose, scraggy and naked, beside the pearling luggers lying on their sides or barely raised their heads above the water when the boats were floated, An immensely long pier, long enough to ride the fluctuating tide, loaded cattle on board for shipment to Batavia and Singapore. We boarded with the cattle.

After our return to England began one of our strangest enterprises; we built a house in London on freehold land at the corner of Tufton and Romney Streets, Westminster, not because we thought of living permanently in England but because it seemed an interesting idea and a good investment as houses at that time were relatively cheap to build. The house was a *tour de force* on the part of our architect, Andrew Butler; on a long thin almost impossible site he had achieved most things one could wish for: oil heating, a service lift, a garage, a pram garage on ground level, and a tiny roof garden close enough to Big Ben to make us conscious of its tremendous presence and the confident ring of its voice.

We were aware that London was a concealed and subtle city and that it would take a long time to know it. Everything was there if one could find it. It belonged to the millions of Londoners who lived in it throughout the year rather than to the rich and privileged who ran in and out of it. The mass of people were kindly, humorous and enduring. They knew and used their city to the full: its street markets, its theatres, its Promenade concerts, its underground tubes, its buses, its open spaces, its ponds. The wide green parks were filled with people especially in the luncheon hour and at week-ends. Then the grass was covered with moving figures, and in the summer couples lay back in bright deck chairs looking like flocks of birds resting from a flight.

The people understood the life of their city which yet was broken up into countless villages where their private lives were led and where they found their friends. The central villages of

Westminster and Mayfair were little different in essence from the more remote ones; their circles were as tight, they knew as much about each other and were as fond of gossip.

The second Labour Government was returned to office in the House of Commons with the defeat of Mr Baldwin by Mr Ramsay Macdonald in May 1929. Lord Thomson went back to his post as Secretary of State for Air. He became once more involved in the construction by the Government of the airship R.101, a project he had sponsored in 1924.

On a letter from C. B. Thomson to Marthe Bibesco dated January 1929 lies the shadow of his fate: ‘. . . the dying months of the year 1928, a bad year in history, as marked as any other for human folly, but not redeemed by anything heroic except the exploits of a few flying women. Aviation is the new development and attracts me a good deal . . . Looking back I see rosy visions ahead, or at any rate outside; there is nothing but that for me’.

In spite of the uncertain history up to this date of dirigibles, all lighter than air though all technically different – the vulnerable Zeppelins which in wartime had offered themselves to attack like sitting ducks, the Shenandoah, R.100 – it was still believed that the dirigible had a positive future. Though it was not thought that its speed would ever much exceed eighty miles per hour, neither was a high speed expected for the aeroplane. It had not yet shown the tremendous technical advances which were to prove it step by step capable of carrying heavy loads over long distances at an ever-increasing speed, reaching the incredible, that made head winds of little matter.

C.B. believed in the future of R.101. As well it had for him a special romantic appeal. It was to take him on its inaugural flight to India, the country where he was born and where he expected to return later as Viceroy.

He watched its development at Cardington like an anxious parent, walking over the structure, envisaging an ample floating apartment that would safely and comfortably traverse long distances between continent and continent.

Dick and I accompanied him one day on such a visit to the

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airship, stepping carefully through the empty compartments, outlined though not yet fitted, so wide in space after the tight little aeroplanes we both had flown in. Dick noted with misgiving that every ten yards or so a hand fire-extinguisher was installed.

I tried to think of this fragile self-contained almost blind world, floating like a cloud with its crew and passengers eating and living within that world, as a craft tough enough to ride a stormy sky, but this was difficult to do. The airship seemed too frail, too flammable, too unstable; in its speed too leisurely, in its form too unlike a projectile.

I have never been able to accept altogether the idea of any aircraft as a self-contained place, of sealing oneself in, drawing down the blinds on the outer world and retreating into eating or sleeping. While an aircraft is a means of travel it is also a ship launched from earth into air, the entry into another dimension whence travellers are privileged to observe the heavens: the stars and planets, the sun and moon in their rising and setting, storms and the play of lightning, cloud layers and the snatches of land and sea beneath them, sometimes a clear vision of the arc of the globe. All the panoply of the skies in which the aircraft and its occupants are a sentient part.

The landscape of the air in its height and its depth, its swift transition in a few hours through all the seasons and climates of the world! Where else can be seen the vision, stretching into infinity, of pyramids and columns of cloud piled high over hidden islands, leaving the flat blue sea bared to our eyes, or the sun in the northern winter shining moon-pale through bands of indigo on to a feathery rust-red plain? Where else can we see the stars, seeming larger and brighter from our closeness to them, echoed by the scattered lights of human habitation on the dark earth far below?

I contemplate with horror the day we shall be invited to travel by air in a neon-lit blind metal container. As it might be, travelling through an unknown country, playing Bridge.

C.B. who was to be accompanied by Sir Sefton Brancker and several other passengers, came to say good-bye to us in Tufton Street the day before he left. There had been a good deal of

discussion about the preparedness of the airship for the flight but the experts had given it the clearance and C.B. felt he should go. He appeared happy, confident, excited. He was taking with him his batman whose mother he had made provision for in case anything went wrong on the flight.

The night of take-off, 4th October 1930, was wild and stormy; the wind beat against our long London house. On such a night my mother had died in Coblenz; I thought uneasily of the great dirigible buffeting its slow passage over France.

Next morning at first light our milkman sent up the dark news that R.101 had crashed in flames near Beauvais with the loss of nearly all lives.

So departed, with his companions in adventure, a rare man.

In 1929 the government of the Nationalist-Country Party coalition of Mr S. M. Bruce and Dr Earle Page was defeated at the polls in Australia and a Labour government led by Mr J. H. Scullin came into office in a period that included the devastating economic depression. The new Prime Minister came to London to consult with Mr Ramsay Macdonald and his Cabinet. We wondered if Dick's appointment would be terminated but Mr Scullin saw the value of such an office. At the same time Dick told him that he had it in mind to leave London and return to Australia to try to enter politics.

'Politics is a disheartening and frustrating job, my boy!' said Mr Scullin.

Nevertheless we returned to Australia.

Canberra

The dreadful years of the depression laid an almost impossible burden on the Labour Government led by Mr Scullin, but the anxiety of those years was shared by all political parties. In late 1931 Mr Scullin lost the Federal Election to a man who crossed the floor of the House from the Labour benches to lead the newly formed United Australia Party: Joseph Aloysius Lyons who remained Prime Minister of Australia until his death in 1939.

Dick was elected to the House of Representatives as U.A.P. member for Corio which included the city of Geelong. He became Assistant Treasurer in 1933 and Treasurer in 1935.

While he was Federal Treasurer Dick had the designs on the Australian coins revised.

The penny which had for decoration merely the words 'One Penny' on the obverse side soon carried the image of the kangaroo striding forward, the florin and the sixpence a coat of arms, the shilling the head of a merino ram, and the threepenny bit a delicate pattern of ears of wheat. These coins were designed by Douglas Annand of Sydney and engraved for minting by Milner Gray in England.

At the time of the accession of King George VI in 1937 a five shilling piece was struck bearing on one side the ceremonial crown of Edward the Confessor, supported by the words 'One Crown'. This coin did not long remain in circulation. People kept it as a souvenir and its currency faded out.

The political story of the thirties in Canberra is generally known; it was often dramatic.

In spite of the opportunities I had in London to observe something of the permutations of persons engaged in this strange

profession of politics, which some look upon as a game as well as a responsibility, there was much to learn at close quarters in Canberra.

The outlook in Australia appeared to me more simple and direct than it was in London. More naïve no doubt. It seemed also that here was a stronger sense of mateship in individual troubles amongst members of all parties. But beyond the interplay of personalities in politics which exists in every country must lie the unknown factor of events, powerful difficult to anticipate, to understand, to resolve.

There were some brilliant figures in the House at that time: John Latham, the Brennan brothers, one on each side politically, Frank Anstey, William Morris Hughes, another Welshman gifted like Lloyd George with fire and a silken tongue who had left the Labour Party long before Lyons.

Dick, still starry-eyed in politics, seated one day next to Mr Hughes in Cabinet complained that a certain decision was not logical. 'Logic! Logic!' screamed Mr Hughes who was deaf, 'What is logic! Life is not logical, man is not logical! Child-birth is not logical!'

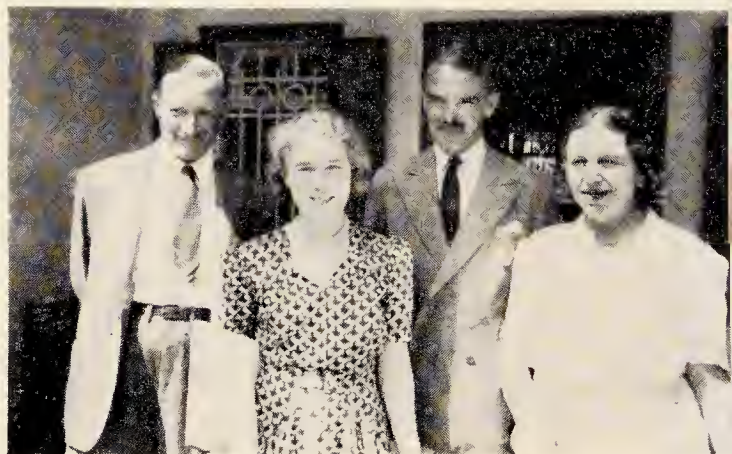
Except in hotels there was little accommodation round Canberra for Ministers and Members. Most lived in their electorates and shuttled each week during the parliamentary sessions to and from such continental distances as Perth and Brisbane and Adelaide. They travelled in trains whose gauges varied from State to State so that passengers were tipped out, usually by night, into other carriages of appropriate width.

Duntroon, an area that had been built up into a training college for military cadets round the original station homestead of the Campbell family, was now deserted. The Scullin government had removed the trainees to a suburb of Sydney.

We were given the choice of the empty houses there – high honest houses that looked across the stretch of paddocks and the river Molonglo to the scattered city of Canberra, sheltered from the west by mountain ranges that rose high enough to catch the snows of winter. The wide valley of Canberra was itself eighteen hundred feet above sea level.



Mr Churchill, R.G.C., Air
Chief Marshal Sir Sholto
Douglas, Sir Alan Brooke,
C.I.G.S. 1943



Sir Edward and Lady Spears,
R.G.C. and M.C.



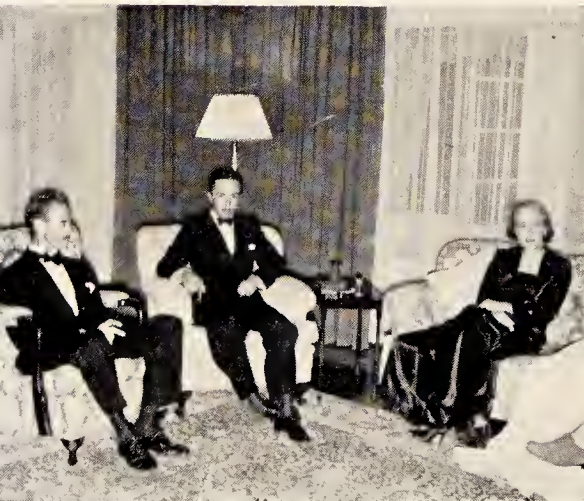
Lady Spears and M.C. in Tobruk



Warren Hastings' silver throne

Cecil Beaton

The Shah of Persia, the Empress,
R.G.C., M.C., and Sir Reader
Bullard at the Shah's Palace,
Teheran. 1942



The Regent of Irak, R.G.C. and
M.C.

We tidied up one of the five houses that had been designed for officers and moved in with our two children and later my nephew Patrick Ryan. It was a charming house and became more so when lawns grew around it again, one to receive the snowy petals of the flowers from an old plum tree. A swimming pool and a log stable we built ourselves. In time we even had an emu to live with us amongst the ponies, eating their food while they ate hers, and making the occasional rumbling noise of a distant drum. She chose us of her own free will and her name was Emily though I always felt she was a male.

Once again I furnished a dwelling. It was considered austere; its wooden furniture made by Frederick Ward was simple and distinguished; the dining-room chairs came via Tufton Street from Thonet in Czecho-Slovakia; they were the first steel-tubing chairs of their kind in Australia.

Lady Gowrie, wife of the Governor-General, a dear and able woman, murmured, 'The Caseys' house will be all right when Maie gets her own things around her!'

In the nineteen-thirties we had inherited with Rupert a farm at Berwick, twenty eight miles south-east of Melbourne. Following a career which had taken him to such places as Thailand and the U.S.S.R. where he learned to speak Russian, he returned to Australia after an interval of over thirty years and we all lived together, off and on, in this house where I am now seated writing. Rupert won S. M. Bruce's old electorate of Flinders, which includes the village of Berwick, and he held it from 1940 until his sudden death in 1952. He went out like a light.

When Dick and I first went to Canberra air services were still under-developed so we decided it was practicable for us to learn to pilot an aeroplane. He was taught at Laverton by Group Captain Scherger of the R.A.A.F., an uneasy tutelage because he was then Federal treasurer and therefore 'news' as he did circuits and landings in an Avro Cadet. When he went solo he was horrified to find another aircraft carrying a Press photographer floating off his wing-tip. Even I was mild news when I began to learn, infrequently, at Essendon, packed with cushions in a De Havilland Moth. I did no good until I had some continuous lessons in

Canberra in a Taylor Cub. It had a 45 h.p. Continental engine and was indeed a vehicle for pure and transparent flying; at the altitude of Canberra it was nearly powerless, with so little range of speed that in any but the lightest wind it tended to land backwards.

In 1938, full of confidence with twentyfive hours solo each, we acquired a Percival Vega Gull aircraft through the advice and help of the distinguished pilot and navigator P. G. Taylor (now Sir Gordon Taylor). He was the man who had saved Kingsford Smith's aircraft, the Lady Southern Cross, from disaster between New Zealand and the Australian coast in 1935. A crash into the sea from engine trouble was averted by Bill Taylor who climbed out under the wing several times to transfer oil in a vacuum flask from one engine to the other while Kingsford Smith flew the aircraft almost at the stall. For this Bill Taylor was given the George Cross.

Soon after we received the Gull he escorted Dick and me to Alice Springs in the centre of Australia to prove to us its virtues. He did most of the flying and all the navigating. I could not understand at the time why Bill seemed to be tired by night-fall but I do now. His was navigation of the most classic kind with no navigational aids, radio or reliable weather reports. He took us via Broken Hill and Oodnadatta, a route that had few landmarks, by dead reckoning plus instinct or what he described as 'low cunning'. We arrived exactly and on time over each fuelling point.

The Gull was a superb machine for those, or indeed for any days as it cruised at 138 miles per hour with a fixed pitch propeller. We flew it from a field at Berwick to Canberra and back. Almost door to door transport.

Dick's mother, who still thought of flying as intrepid bird-man stuff, invoked the help of Mr W. M. Hughes (whose great pre-occupation at that time was not Dick's safety) to discourage this venture. Said Mrs Casey, 'Dick will listen to you I know, so you will help me, darling, won't you? This flying seems to me so dangerous!'

For years now Adolf Hitler had been building up the Nazi world of steely obedient men. Not for show was a great army

organised, equipped, trained. It was designed to vindicate by its might the German defeat by the Allies in 1918.

Hitler, like earlier leaders of Germany, had a contempt for the British and their small regular forces; the businesslike minds of his associates and service chiefs took no account of inponderables, of the unpredictable, of the possibility of miracles.

It happened that Poland was invaded by the Germans and that Britain and France had guaranteed its integrity, but Hitler's vast army was set for war and the manner of its provoking was incidental.

Britain and France accepted the challenge in September 1939. Then began a curious twilight period (the phony war) lasting seven months before the armies of Germany revealed their over-riding strength.

After the declaration of war by Australia following that of Great Britain, Dick resigned from Parliament to open Australia's first diplomatic post abroad. He was sent by Mr R. G. Menzies, then Prime Minister, to Washington as Australian Minister.

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Dick left for the United States early in 1940 but the rest of us came later because our children developed mumps, one at a time, and could not be moved.

On our steamer across the Pacific travelled a young blonde journalist from Melbourne, Pat Jarrett, who was to become my secretary in Washington and afterwards in Bengal.

Dick had known Americans since 1910 when he had gone from the Melbourne University to Cambridge to do the mechanical science tripos at Trinity College. He was the only Australian at Trinity amongst five hundred young men mainly from the British Isles. Most of them had been at schools together and in their first year 'coagulated like a lot of clams in their ex-school groupings'. There were also some Americans from Harvard, Yale, Princeton and other universities doing post-graduate work who were in the same position as Dick. They knew no one. He was thrown together with them and they became his friends. On his way back to Australia in 1913 he spent a month or two in the United States and had his first experience of this remarkable country.

War in France in 1918 was to show him another phase of American life. One of the two infantry Brigades of the U.S. 33rd Division was in loose attachment to the Australian Army Corps and it was Dick's duty as a General Staff Officer to keep in touch with their training arrangements and later their offensive operations. These tasks brought him into intimate contact with their formation and unit commanders. In August he was appointed Chief Staff Officer of a hastily organised liaison force about the size of a Division made up of Australians, British and Americans who were to hold a mile of the front north of the Somme and take

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part in the great August advance in line with the Australian Corps on their right and the British third corps on their left.

He felt happy and comfortable working with the Americans as indeed did most Australians associated with them; from the first they mixed well and took kindly to each other.

When we reached Washington Dick was looking for a Legation and a Chancery. He decided on a house raised by a builder for himself, which stood on two acres of virgin land between Cleveland Avenue and Woodland Drive by the edge of the flowery woods that run through to Massachusetts Avenue. Some of the original tall trees were still there, showing between their trunks the single-rose flowers of the dog-wood.

This was wartime for us and we furnished the house sparsely, much of it from pieces we managed to bring from our house in Tufton Street in London. Australian paintings hung on the walls; Australian curtain designs by Frances Burke suggested the muted green of the eucalypt; clipped lambskin rugs lay on the floor. There was only one alien note: a Picasso painting hanging on the dining-room wall, *Le Repos* 1932 – a heavy head leaning on feathery hands. It was offset in boldness by a large screen designed by Mary Cecil Allen, an Australian painter living in New York. Six kangaroos were drawn in indigo on a pale background, with a great red kangaroo dominating them.

None of Dick's earlier contacts with Americans, or mine in Coblenz, had prepared us for life in Washington. Entering it through diplomatic portals was a new experience, hedged and disciplined by protocol and custom. Diplomacy was the survival of a pattern that had been followed for hundreds of years. It was the urgency of war and subsequent events that forced adjustment to a changing world so that, while continuity of contact and details of procedure were preserved, many of the functions of diplomats were gradually taken over by heads of governments and politicians.

On his arrival in the United States as Australia's first direct diplomatic representative, Dick had an interest for the American government greater than our population warranted. Australia had a potential strategic importance in the Pacific area and already

there was a growing anxiety among thinking Americans about the attitude of Japan.

Dick's initial responsibility in Washington was to keep in close touch with the British Ambassador Lord Lothian, who was at the zenith of his career, and with Mr. Cordell Hull Secretary of State. The exceptional circumstances of war made this easy.

He had also to establish from nothing the nucleus of a Legation, with its supporting members, service attachés, supply, and others that were gradually needed. Another task was to try to make Australia favourably and rapidly known to as many Americans as possible. Australia was very little known. Even assistants in Washington stores were bemused by the word and constantly jotted it down as Austria.

The serious American newspapers, while they varied from state to state in international outlook, becoming less interested in the war as they were farther from the east coast, were drawn together by the syndicated articles of columnists which were read throughout the country. Dick found the press accurate in the reporting of news and as a whole scrupulous in recording statements and speeches.

Gradually we came to know many editors, columnists, and journalists, in New York as well as in Washington. Pat Jarrett, who was recognised by journalists as a bird of the same species, became the first foreigner to be made a member of the Women's Press Club in Washington.

Life for representatives of the British Commonwealth countries as belligerents in a non-belligerent country was awkward, as it was alas for many others during the increasingly dreadful year of 1940. Norway and Denmark were invaded by the Germans in April, Belgium and Holland in May and France in June. The intense air bombardment of Britain began in July.

All these devastating events had their effects in Washington on the diplomatic representatives of the countries involved, who were sent into black despair.

It was the duty of every newly arrived wife of the head of a Mission to call on every other diplomatic wife in order of her seniority, which was based on the length of time her husband had

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been in Washington. There were then some fifty diplomatic posts so this was a large undertaking as these calls meant a twenty minute tête à tête with each woman, a gesture she had to return in kind. Though in ordinary times some of these visits might have been empty of content, during 1940 nearly every wife one met, whether of a non-belligerent, a belligerent, or one on the knife-edge of expectancy, was an alert worried woman, sometimes a distraught one seeking encouragement and hope.

Some countries, as we know, never emerged again except as satellites screened from the eyes of the rest of the world. Those who represented them at that time became homeless, dispossessed, citizens of no land, sometimes without means of personal survival.

This custom of paying calls not only on the diplomatic corps but on the wives of Justices and Americans in senior governmental positions, though it took up so much time on both sides, was valuable. In the ordained tête à tête, in fact an interview, there was an opportunity to begin to know interesting persons and to find out how they were thinking. For me, I was happy in this arrangement because I have always enjoyed a tête à tête more than any other form of human contact.

While the sympathy of many Americans was with Great Britain and the countries that were being over-run there was also a good deal of anti-British feeling although this did not extend to Australia. Anti-British feeling was based on several factors. It existed in Americans with different roots – German, Italian, even Irish. It was bred from individual experiences and dislikes. Below these reasons lay the inevitably critical attitude towards a country which had been for many years a world leader. Britain had a hundred years of such leadership behind her, long enough to build up many resentments and antagonisms.

As the terrible year wore on the conviction grew in many places that Britain could not survive, a conviction genuinely held by such persons as Mr Joseph Kennedy, American Ambassador in London, and Colonel Charles Lindbergh. They believed Germany to be invincible. This opened up all kinds of uneasy speculation, a need for re-thinking, an uncertainty of the reaction on America itself. Some Americans talked of the British fleet

leaving for Canada, there to make a last stand. That, we assured them, would never happen.

Admiration was constantly expressed for the character of English civilians; they were considered to be behaving with wonderful fortitude and heroism. I passed this tribute on to Kitty Ritson who was then living at Esher, south of London. She replied rather tartly that there was nothing else they could do. She added that 'whereas the first world war was one for combatants, in this second war everyone came to the party'.

One extraordinary act of faith emerged – in Britain certainly, in Washington also. At no time amongst all the intense personal anxieties was there in the British Commonwealth community any fear that Britain might not survive.

A steady belief in the future strengthened everyone in this large family in Washington. Full of confidence they assured their unhappy colleagues from over-run lands that in the end Germany would be defeated. There was little logic in this, but as Billy Hughes had emphasised to Dick in Canberra, 'Life is not logical'.

Even the evacuation from Dunkirk, a retreat, became endowed with the qualities of a triumph, which in a way it was. As for the air battle of Britain a little later, this miracle was accepted as a natural phenomenon like the rising of the sun after a dark night.

While the over-riding public opinion in America was against being involved in any war, President Roosevelt, the Secretary of State, Mr Cordell Hull, and others in the government did not waver in their belief that Britain was the outpost of the United States and that it was essential to American interests that it should be supported and helped.

News came to us over the radio, wedged in between commercial advertising. The invasion of France was announced by courtesy of a petroleum company – the blood spilt by human beings linked to the sale of gasoline. The shock of the collapse of France was so great that many turned their minds away, as they would from the death of a loved woman – something they would neither believe nor accept. Everything flowed from the radio in a steady stream of words – destruction, together with the embel-

ishments of daily life. This was something one could never get used to, that one has never got used to.

Pat Jarrett, rudderless in her task as my secretary, was given a small book to help her. It was the *Washington Social Register*, and invaluable. In a special category it included the names and precedence of members of the diplomatic corps. Other names were listed alphabetically. The only ones classified, beyond those of foreigners, came under the baffling headings of Married Maidens and Dilatory Domiciles.

I have a copy of the book in my hand as I write and I look back with nostalgia. As I glance through the pages my vision turns many of the names into their remembered human form – remembered with pleasure and appreciation of much kindness and help that we were given.

Such glowing names and persons as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Mr Justice Harlan Stone and Mrs Stone, the Chief of Staff of the American Army, General George Marshall and Mrs Marshall, Mr Justice Felix Frankfurter and Mrs Frankfurter, as Mr and Mrs Dean Acheson.

Though a Democratic government was in power when we arrived and Franklin Roosevelt was re-elected in late 1940 we met as many Republicans as Democrats in the Washington scene. There were several Republicans holding office in the Administration, amongst them Colonel Knox, Secretary of the Navy, and Mr Stimson, Secretary of War.

In fact we met so many that when I first had the privilege of being introduced to Mrs Nicholas Longworth (née Alice Roosevelt, daughter of Theodore Roosevelt) I said, 'At last I am meeting a Democrat!' Said she, 'Like Hell you are!' a fascinating ageless woman of structural beauty, of rapier tongue, of unquenchable spirit.

Our early privilege, Dick's and mine, was to call upon the wife of the President at the White House. This was altogether a visit to royalty. We were led through high galleries to an oval room agreeably underfurnished; it was already sufficiently embellished by deep blue walls scattered over with emblems of gold. Winter

daylight streamed through long windows that looked out upon a formal garden.

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, not beautiful, had a fine-boned distinction that made her seem so. Her upturned fingers hovered with grace over the tea-cups. We were aware of her quality and kindness – the image of a queen. She was at the beginning of a personal career which progressed from height to height during the years she was at the White House and later when she became a widow – perhaps the best liked and respected widow in the world, the sponsor of justice and racial equality.

I am reminded of the first diplomatic wife I visited, the Argentine Ambassadors. I had no idea who she was but it seemed appropriate to wear for the visit a hat with a red rose tucked behind one ear. She turned out to be no South American beauty, but a beauty nonetheless, Mme Felipe Espil from Chicago.

One of my non-diplomatic calls was on Mrs Robert Woods Bliss, then living in the marvellous setting, indoor and outdoor, of Dumbarton Oaks, since presented by the Bliss's to Harvard University as a centre for Byzantine and medieval studies.

Mildred Bliss had a bony elegance of form and spirit. From this first meeting I thought of her as Queen Elizabeth the First of England in her earlier days, with her red hair and pale aquiline features. She took me out of her house to show me a small temple-like building with writing over the entrance. 'You read Greek, of course?' said Mrs Bliss to me. I shook my head regretfully so she translated the words. 'Art is man's escape from the sorrows of the world'.

A long time after the war I told Robert Bliss, who had been a distinguished member of the State Department and ambassador to several countries, how well I thought he looked. 'And why would I not?' he said 'I have been happy for so many years!' And indeed his romance with Mildred began when they were both adolescent and his father had married her mother. Later still I told Mildred Bliss how much I deplored the fact that I could not live for another hundred years. Though grateful for the intense interest of the period through which I had passed I still wanted, so much, to see the present world come out of the inevitable troubles of an era

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of change. She agreed fervently with my desire to live on but reminded me how fortunate we both were to have lived without hardship or want, without fear or betrayal, not dispossessed, not severed from those we loved.

In the line of calls another charming woman, who had remarried, apologised for leaving on me her last husband's cards because she could not find those of her current husband. The cards she gave me were those of General Douglas MacArthur. An omen.

In those days of war tension diplomats whose countries were involved went out socially as little as possible, only to dinners and luncheons where they could discuss subjects that mattered to them. Two well-known Washington hostesses, both widows sympathetic to Britain and her Allies, gave small helpful parties from time to time.

One of them, Mrs Truxtun Beale, lived in the historic Decatur House built in 1818 on La Fayette Square close to the White House. It was the first private residence in the square, and the last. She has bequeathed it to the National Trust for Historic Preservation so that its unique character may not be lost to the city.

Marie Beale lived longer in Decatur House than any of its other distinguished occupants. It became as much a part of her as a garment, but through her intelligent and vital personality it belonged not only to its own period of design and proportion, of elegant furnishings; it belonged also to the world of contemporary thought. We sat in her lovely rooms lit by the light of candles though for all its atmosphere this house was no retreat. It was a springboard for ideas and action.

The other kind hostess was Mrs Robert Low Bacon, Virginia, a radiant woman concerned with affairs. Her floating entry into a room made one think of a galleon in proud sail.

The most surprising hostess in Washington was Mrs Evalyn Walsh McLean. She sent out invitations that read like letters but were in fact long telegrams. She invited us occasionally to dinner on Sundays but we did not at once feel inclined to accept. Eventually we did accept and arrived at what her invitation had described as a small dinner to find two hundred guests assembled.

Mrs McLean wore the Hope diamond as a pendant from her neck. It was an immense oval stone, brilliant and slightly brown in colour and was reputed to be a jewel unlucky to its owners. Her dinners, once attended, were fascinating. The guests sat at round tables for six or eight persons; almost inevitably I found myself next to the representative of an enemy country or else an anti-British American. 'But, Madame Casey', the embarrassed diplomat or anti-British American would say, 'we will not of course discuss the war!' 'On the contrary', I would reply, 'it's the only thing interesting to talk about!'

The presidential election took place late in 1940. Public feeling was whipped up throughout the States by the old process of the smearing or smoothing of candidates. Even the sophisticated city of Washington entered the ring with spirit. It was thought that Wendell Wilkie might defeat Franklin Roosevelt.

We ourselves could take no public point of view in the politics of another country. All we were able to do in election conversations was to skirmish on the outskirts.

Election news eclipsed war news in the minds of many Americans though it was closely related to it. The position in Europe was ugly. Britain was being assaulted by air and though the attack was arrested in the battle of Britain this was only one short holding step. Invasion was possible. The future, not only of Britain but of much of the world, appeared uncomfortably insecure.

There was more passion poured out in those pre-election days than we had seen in Australian campaigns. Republicans and Democrats, meeting at informal gatherings, fought each other with intense heat; columnist roared at columnist. But except in a few bitter cases where dislike of a candidate amounted to phobia, little bad blood remained after an argument. Even husbands and wives, who disagreed fiercely with each other, went contentedly home together.

One of the most disarming qualities of Americans is this capacity of individuals to discuss a subject with heat – a ding-dong argument, wide open and yet remain comfortable friends. Not all peoples can do this. I remembered that Paul Tirard had referred

many years back in Coblenz to the 'bon enfant' character of the Americans.

Added to this capacity was their wide-spread generosity, composite or individual, whether rich or poor. After the first violent air attacks on England, countless American families, living modestly, offered to take English children and look after them while the danger lasted. This meant financial sacrifice and a good deal of personal effort on the part of the housewife who usually had a small house, children of her own and quite enough to do.

These invitations were accepted gratefully by some anxious parents in the more vulnerable parts of England who felt they had not the right to deny their children this chance of survival. It was not so much the bombing they feared for them as the threat of invasion, of conquest, of extinction. Some young Britons remained in America for years. They carried home with them an intimate knowledge of another way of life which made adjustment with their own families sometimes difficult. But friendships had been built that brought mutual enrichment and understanding.

Before we left Australia our Percival Vega Gull aircraft had been acquired by the Australian Government as a communications machine.

A few months after our arrival in Washington it seemed appropriate for us to own another light aeroplane so that we might see something of the American countryside and meet people in an informal way.

Through the Australian pilot Nancy Bird Walton we met a U.S. test pilot who with his wife were turned by time and events into dear and faithful friends. He was James Blackstone Taylor Jr., a brave handsome laughing man, short but immensely powerful with great shoulders and a diaphragm that enabled him to withstand 130 times the force of gravity. Jimmie Taylor was for twentyfour years one of America's foremost test pilots; in this time he tested six hundred new aircraft. From Princeton he had enlisted in the Navy Air Service which he left in 1920 to go into business to test and determine scientifically the characteristics of

aeroplanes, to learn more and more about stresses and strains and torque and weather 'until there wasn't very much of the unexpected left to expect'. After the attack on Pearl Harbour he went back into the Navy as a Lieutenant-Commander to continue testing.

With his help Dick bought a Fairchild 24 aircraft, one of the few fitted with a Ranger engine. We were faced by technical difficulties of registration and hangarage. Some Embassy air attachés flew their own aircraft from Washington but no diplomatic head of Mission had yet done so, nor had his wife. This position was resolved by our aeroplane being registered in Australia with letters instead of the American figures and VH-ADF (Able Dog Fox) took up its rather strange life in a hangar on Bolling Field, Anacostia, which it shared with the aircraft of the German and Italian air attachés. This gave us an uneasy feeling. We thought of these enemy machines baring their metal teeth at our Fairchild during the night, though no doubt it would have snapped back in its own forthright language.

Sergeant Reuss of the American Airforce, who looked after it with pride, managed to have it transferred to safe and familiar American surroundings. Here it was sheltered until it was shipped to Australia in 1942 for use by the R.A.A.F.

From our aircraft we looked at the city of Washington spread beneath us like a series of carpets, unlike and bound together only by the colours of the seasons: the charcoal lines of winter, the rose swathes of cherry-blossom in spring, the green and gold of summer and autumn.

When we saw them from the ground the trees in the great boulevards were dwarfed by the pale State buildings that rose behind them proclaiming the city to be the nation's Capital, while in the suburb of Georgetown the trees had grown taller than the old red-brick houses in the narrow streets. Their bare branches reached towards each other in winter and in summer met in heavy lime-green arches under which coloured children skipped along like lambs in spring.

Our aircraft proved to be a useful link with the world outside Washington. During most week-ends we would fly ourselves to

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some field. Hagerstown, Williamsburg, Rehoboth, Baltimore, have luncheon on the ground and talk with the local people who on discovering Dick was a Minister believed him to be a man of God.

We made flights to New York in the twilight atmosphere of smoke and fog that constantly clouded the coastal strip north of Philadelphia. Skirting New York to land at Hicksville Country Club airfield on Long Island we looked out upon that miraculous city rising like an immense graveyard of high monuments, its feet lost in mist, its shape defined by shining water-ways.

Gradually we took the Fairchild farther afield, to Canada by way of the Hudson River, to Florida. Caught by bad weather in 1941 on our return from Vero Beach we had to leave our aircraft at Raleigh.

Mr. William D. Pauley who was concerned with the manufacture of aircraft, amongst them the Harlow light low-winged monoplane, suggested that Mr O'Meara (one of America's senior gliders as well as a power pilot) should fly me down in a Harlow to pick up the Fairchild. Out of this completed episode came a typically generous act. Mr Pauley telephoned me a month later in Washington. 'I'm just off to the Argentine,' he said, 'but, before I go I'd like to give you a Harlow aircraft. Use it for any purpose you like!' I gulped and thanked him. I thought of the battle of Britain and the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund and telephoned the President of the New York Branch, Mrs John Barry Ryan, who was to become a loved friend.

It was decided to raffle the aircraft for the Fund. After many ups and downs and the sale of raffle tickets, it emerged that this action was, in war circumstances, undesirable and probably illegal. So the Harlow – oh dear – had to be unraffled! It was subsequently sold outright for a useful sum.

1941 was a year of electrifying events. Germany and Russia had a non-aggression pact; therefore the U.S.S.R. Ambassador to Washington was not an ally, neither was he an enemy. M. Constantine Oumansky and his gentle bovine wife operated in an ill-defined zone. By some quirk of the imagination Dick had

prophesied to M. Oumansky on the first day of May that Germany would invade Russia on 30th June. This idea was rejected with shouts of amusement. Dick was in fact a few days late. Out of an almost clear sky the Germans attacked on 27th June and M. Oumansky advanced towards Dick with the cry of, 'Mon chère collègue ! Now we are indeed Comrades !'

Few persons at that time believed that the U.S.S.R. was capable of effective resistance, and indeed observing, many years later, the long range effects of the terrible attacks by the Germans on Moscow and Leningrad it is difficult to understand how they were endured and fended off.

As a minor incident, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor came to Washington in September from the Bahamas where he was Governor and Commander-in-Chief. For some strange reason this visit was as embarrassing to Americans as it was to the British community. No-one knew what to do about it.

Two parties were given for them, one by members of the Washington Press Club, one by the British Embassy in the absence of the Ambassador, Lord Halifax, who succeeded Lord Lothian after his sudden death in 1940.

At the Press Club reception I happened to be the first British subject to meet the Windsors as they stood side by side on a small dais. I was aware of an interest in my movements. I curtsied to him and shook hands with her. What was I expected to do?

The British Embassy dinner was clouded by a similar uneasiness as some of the senior Americans who had been invited, did not accept, nor did some of the British. But here were two persons who had taken a big decision, now well behind them; they were entitled to be treated as human beings, with courtesy and compassion.

A wistful small-boy expression, increased in its effect by his thick bright hair and restless eyes, had always been one of the Duke's characteristics. This had become accentuated and lay less easily on his older face, to sadden those of us who looked at him. His Duchess had a less revealing face.

There is no doubt that the Duke of Windsor felt himself to be out of things. He no longer shared in the inner knowledge of

affairs. Not only was it his crown that he had renounced; it was the world. Its strong currents were passing him by.

On Sunday afternoon 7th December countless persons were tuned in on the radio to 'The Pause that Refreshes' listening languidly if at all for what was to come: an extraordinary statement, spoken urgently, that froze listeners into attention, the obliterating attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbour.

For all of us, Americans or not, there was an interval of numb incomprehension, like the pause after the inflicting of a wound when no pain can be felt. Then, in the United States, a surge of rage, with an aftermath of shame. Nothing was the same in Washington after this event. It was like the stirring of an anthill into violent activity. The country was unified in thought, consolidated into effort.

An awful idea entered my head at this moment, but apparently it entered my head only. I feared that the President in declaring war on Japan might not also declare war on Germany. Fortunately Germany anticipated this and declared war on the United States first.

American women, as well as diplomatic wives, who were becoming sadly depleted in number, had until Pearl Harbour worked consistently for the Red Cross and had personally, as well as in groups, kept up supplies of parcels to prisoners of war.

Now, in masses, they were being taught various aspects of civil defence, fire fighting, dealing with gas masks, advanced First Aid courses.

The women of our small Australian community had for some time been running film sessions, with tape-recorded commentaries, at our Legation. These covered war activities in Australia and in other fields, and anything else we thought might be of interest. Our men were too busy to help with these sessions so we learned to work the projectors and sound tracks ourselves, only calling in our Legation chauffeur, Calvert (a most handy as well as handsome American), when something was about to blow up. We widened these to include films from other British Commonwealth countries (which were not too closely knit) Canada, New Zealand, South Africa.

Winston Churchill visited Washington soon after Pearl Harbour bringing with him Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, to become head of the British Military Mission. Dill's association with General George Marshall was one of the first great partnerships of the war.

Dick had first met Mr Churchill in 1916 in France. After the evacuation from Gallipoli he was sent as one of an advance party of Australian officers from the Middle East to learn something about trench warfare. Churchill had just resigned as First Lord of the Admiralty on the issue of the Dardanelles and was now for a short time in France in command of a battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, to which Dick was attached. Colonel Churchill was a figure particularly easy to recognise as he wore a French steel kepi.

On March 14th, 1942, as Dick and I were about to dine quietly with Colonel Knox Secretary of the Navy and Mrs Knox, a telegram arrived from Mr Churchill offering Dick the post of Minister of State in the Middle East with a seat in the War Cabinet. We were a little disconnected during dinner. Dick could not reply to this invitation without consulting Mr Curtin, then Labour Prime Minister of Australia, and Dr Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, who was due in San Francisco on March 17th. Mr Churchill was becoming impatient for an answer. On March 18th I answered an overseas call in the night at the Legation, and was told that the Prime Minister of Britain wished to speak to Dick urgently. I gave the caller his address in San Francisco.

Before leaving for the west coast Dick had consulted the President, Lord Halifax, and two others, about the invitation. Mr Roosevelt in particular welcomed the suggestion in the light of the general war picture and the personal link it would establish for him in an area of importance to the United States, of which he had no clear picture.

Dr Evatt agreed that the invitation should be accepted and said that the filling of the post of Australian Minister in Washington would cause no real embarrassment. The Australian situation had altered greatly with the appointments of Generals MacArthur and Brett. General Douglas MacArthur, recalled from Corregidor on the tip of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines just before it fell

to the Japanese, was ordered to Australia and there appointed Supreme Commander of Land, Air and Sea, Allied Forces in S.W. Pacific. Dick telegraphed to Mr. Curtin.

In his New Year message of December 29th from Canberra three weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbour, Mr Curtin had made it clear that 'Australia looks to America free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'. This statement was deeply resented in London and it was a cause of embarrassment to Australians in Washington. President Roosevelt sent for Dick and told him that if it was thought that this statement would ingratiate Australia with the United States he assured him that it would have the opposite effect. It tasted of panic and disloyalty. The President insisted that his remarks were to be regarded as personal and were not to be reported officially.

Mr Churchill and Mr Curtin were in disagreement later over the withdrawal of two Australian divisions from the Middle East, and in his acceptance of Mr Churchill's offer Dick became another bone to be snarled over. It was difficult for him to remain silent throughout the publicity caused by the publication, on Mr Curtin's initiative, of the acid and embarrassing telegrams between Mr Churchill and Mr Curtin.

On the whole we were pleased to be leaving for the Middle East where Mr Churchill had invited me to accompany Dick. It meant leaving our children, but how many hundreds of thousands had done this? Since Pearl Harbour Dick had become increasingly restless; he welcomed an active war task. The Australian Legation was established and service personnel was growing rapidly as the war effort developed in the Pacific. Owen Dixon, a great man and a great jurist, was appointed to succeed Dick.

General Pat Hurley was sent by the President to Australia as his emissary. He arrived in Darwin just as Japanese bombs fell upon our hitherto untouched land. Never before in its history had Australia been threatened by enemy attack; never had a hand been raised against it in violence. This rare immunity prompted Dr Archibald Macleish, poet and Librarian of Congress, who was in Washington as a dollar-a-year man, to speak to me of Australia as 'your immaculate country'.

EIGHT

New York

The elegant expanse of Washington was far removed from that marvel of concentration, the tall city of New York, a legend in its own day, unlike any other city in the world, built upon rock – almost fretted out of man-made rock as was Petra out of rose-red stone.

If one peers from a helicopter into the chasm of Wall Street, or indeed into any other street that crosses the great avenues, a long deep dark sharply-cut slit is revealed, not like a street at all, with ant-like figures moving at the base, intent like ants upon their business.

I first looked closely at the city from the air in 1940 when Jimmie Taylor, who had found us our Fairchild aircraft, took me up in his amphibious aeroplane, a Fleetwing.

We flew round Manhattan, gazing thoughtfully from every angle. We made a tight circuit of the huge statue of Liberty which rose from its tiny island, Bedloes, as though it had drawn itself up from the depths of the harbour to become the accolade of its land. Around the coronet that circled the woman Liberty's splendid head more human ants were swarming.

Jimmie landed the Fleetwing near the base of the statue and threw the movable joy-stick over to me. 'You take it off!' he said.

I, who had never flown from water and had been too much interested in looking at New York to observe how he handled the amphibian, staggered off into the air in a corkscrew movement which sent Pat Jarrett, who was cringing in the back seat, on to her side. Jimmie shouted with laughter. I did better with the landing and splashed gently down on to the little waves.

Nobody should attempt to define the complex personality of

New York

New York, least of all a foreigner. Everybody would have a different impression of it. To those who work and live there its image would be based on personal success and happiness, or unhappiness, brought about through relations with other human beings, close or not so close. If a human being is happy and satisfied by his occupation he likes the place he frequents and finds in it a particular beauty and excitement.

For us New York seemed to be made up of a vast and largely commuting population which worked in the city but returned at night to very different settings outside, where their private lives were led. In New York no one appeared to care much for anybody. One could expect to sink or swim, comfortably unhampered by attention. It was too big a city to be kind; too impersonal to project a warming influence.

In war-time even before the attack on Pearl Harbour the city was in temperament more nervous and volatile than Washington, its people more liable to take fright. But, set on the eastern sea-board of the Atlantic, New York felt itself to be desirably beautiful, a target inviting and vulnerable.

And indeed it was beautiful, from the ground as it was from the air. Long straight wide boulevards drew the eye for miles until the distance was lost in mist; the narrow cross streets whose chasms we had seen from the air became more arresting still when the walls of the high buildings rose up above our heads.

Enchanting were the water lanes that met at the point of Manhattan and moved together towards the Atlantic sea; the wide Hudson and the narrow and swifter flowing East river whose traffic upstream in a conforming world was a delight of individuality. Most of the craft, bulk carriers, pleasure steamers, private launches and others, were unlike in shape and as gaily and oddly coloured as beetles which in many cases they resembled. Only the occasional tug-boat pushing forward like a sooty shoe and small yachts in sail that skimmed by like moths showed the austerity of black and white against the opaque greenish current.

Among the free pleasures of the city was window shopping; walking sometimes along Fifth Avenue in the dusk, looking through the plate glass windows into the glittering surrealist

Tides and Eddies

worlds within. The presentation of goods showed us a new kind of art. It was true art in its handling of colour and form and space.

Hats and garments and accessories were placed in symphonies of colour, jewels were displayed like stars in a firmament, more lovely even in this setting than against the warm flesh of women. We scarcely thought of the wares we saw as objects to be possessed, no more than we would have thought of removing a detail from a masterpiece of painting.

In Madison Avenue the windows were crowded with goods more varied, smaller, more intimate. These seemed accessible.

But the museums, great and diverse, held most beauty for the stranger. Brought from all areas of the world, tremendous works of art filled the galleries and gardens: objects from the past created by anonymous artists, later works attributed to names of every sound and variety, many of them to be found in American telephone books.

As diplomats we were invited to see some aspects of life usually denied to the inhabitants of the city.

An indoctrination of police methods was offered to us by the short and powerful Mayor, Fiorella La Guardia. We tore through the man thoroughfares of the 22nd zone at peak pressure time on May Day in a police car, weaving through the traffic, screaming our way through the red lights at intersections. I recall it was the next morning that Jimmie Taylor made me fly his amphibian. No wonder it seemed a safe and relaxing exploit after my drive of the day before.

We were taken for a police round on a Monday night; because of the break of Sunday this night was considered to be one of lesser crimes.

In the back of a car driven and manned by two officers with Scottish names, as it might be MacTavish and MacKenzie, we sat listening to messages that flowed through by radio calling for police help, mainly from Harlem. Negroes had cast themselves from windows or were fighting with knives. So crowded were they in tenements that it was said a Negro's bed was never cold. It was kept forever warm by dark bodies sleeping in shifts.

A call came that there was trouble in an underworld dive. the

Tub of Blood, but when we arrived there the gathering of coloured persons was frozen into stillness. It was a false and ominous quiet and there was a smell of fear.

We were brought in on the pretext that we were to identify someone. I felt embarrassed and intrusive as I looked around into the dark blank faces which gave us the white-eyeballed look of frightened horses.

With relief we left the Tub of Blood for a huge hall where Negroes and the occasional white were dancing opposite to each other in a frenzy of activity. Teeth and eyes flashed, strong sinuous bodies writhed and twisted, faster and faster, in double time, in quadruple time. It was a spontaneous jungle scene springing from the blood of the coloured dancers who understood the sounds and rhythms and syncopations derived from their race as no white man can. A big Negro with a wooden leg evolved his own pattern of dance, gyrating like a figure round a maypole. The white persons of both sexes stepping amongst them, frenzied as they were, seemed forced and pathetic in this setting. They mistook a kind of hysteria for the real thing – a natural expression of animal exuberance and enjoyment.

Next morning, in this intensive opportunity to observe, we were taken to see a police identification line-up of those who had been detained the night before.

One by one men, sometimes women, were escorted on to a small platform lit by a white spotlight directed into their faces, there to be cross-examined by police officers accompanied by the detectives and individuals who had made charges against them. The auditorium where they sat was in darkness so that the apprehended man was conscious only of the questions that came to him out of the gloom, and of the circle of light in which he himself was so violently framed. It seemed a hideous form of inquisition. (Years later Mr John Foster Dulles, then United States Secretary of State, spoke to us of the effect of powerful light on him when he appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate.)

The men we watched that morning were Negroes or southern Italians; in several cases they had been charged before. Some of the

Negroes were jaunty and full of words, sparkling as though they found enjoyment in the limelight, like actors who were used to their cues. A few Italians were stunned and miserable and could scarcely be induced to speak. Under the glare that washed the colour from their faces they drooped like corpses. They were accused of theft, of attacks with knives, of rape and attempted rape.

The proportion of crime was not greater in New York than in other big cities but for Australians the crimes were unusual through the use of the knife, as were the kinds of faces we saw under the light.

A court new to me, that we were invited to attend, was the Family Court where children in trouble with the police were brought before a magistrate in a quiet panelled hall lit by daylight – a most unfrightening place and procedure. They were gently handled and it was a closed court where pressmen and the public were not permitted to attend.

The child sat on a chair and behind him, out of his vision, were his parents or guardians. The children came from all precincts, from Park Avenue, from down-town. Sometimes they appeared in court for pranks that could not be looked upon as more than naughtiness; sometimes for continuous and extraordinary exploits. One girl sat primly before us with an old anxious face above her little childish body.

A child's behaviour was never considered apart from his parents and background. There were rooms where children could be observed without being aware of it – at work, at play, alone or with other children; rooms where parents or guardians were invited by their surroundings to relax in an atmosphere of peace, so hard for them to find in overcrowded dwellings. Then, perhaps, in privacy they might feel themselves able to reveal to an impersonal stranger some of their concealed thoughts and apprehensions.

With the rise of Hitler an increased flow of foreigners had been coming into America from Europe – refugees of all kinds, high and low, rich and poor. Later followed many distinguished

persons who escaped in order to make plans for the resurgence of France. Some brought priceless works of art to save them from destruction or confiscation.

Paul Rosenberg, from whom we had bought a Picasso painting in 1937, sought us out on his arrival in New York in 1940 and offered to lend us a few of his works of art to hang in our Legation. He was then living in two rooms of an hotel piled with marvellous pictures; some he loved so well that he was never separated from them. They were part of his life of discovery and growth. He had been one of the first dealers in art to be fired by the genius of Picasso and he held for his children some of the earliest and rarest of his work.

Foreigners who had come to America at this time, while grateful for the protection and benevolence of the United States, were unhappy disassociated persons fearing for the future not only of the countries but of the world. The misery of separation from their homes and relatives was increased by their inability to adapt themselves readily to life in a new country which seemed to them at first to be immature and incomprehensible. They did not care for the food and drink, did not understand the customs of those around them or their speech and use of language.

The French, Paul Rosenberg and the political writers Geneviève Tabouis and André Giraud (Pertinax), felt as outcast as if they had been driven from an oasis into the desert. It was difficult for them to find the sustenance of kindred minds.

Though sustenance there was of a most exciting kind as they were to discover: movement and change, thrusting and lively thought accompanied by action and experiment; the strength of a new world made up of persons from many countries and races, able in the freedom of a new setting to contribute something extra.

Paul Rosenberg's initial feelings were sharpened by anxiety for his only son Alexandre aged eighteen who had completed his military training with the artillery in France. In late 1940 he escaped through St. Jean de Luz to Plymouth in England to join the resistance forces of General de Gaulle, the one man who represented what was left of the spirit of France – the one man who was later to restore its pride to this proud country.

Alexandre was sent to a post in French Equatorial Africa whence he and four other officers, restive under inaction in 1942, decided to make for Cairo and the Free French Forces of General Koenig in the Middle East.

This fantastic journey of more than eleven hundred miles from Fort Lamy, south-east of Lake Chad, was undertaken by the five young officers and three hundred natives who crossed the edge of the Sahara desert north-east to Khartoum. Navigation, carried out by Alexandre Rosenberg, was their least anxiety as the sky was clear so that it was easy to steer by the sun or the stars, but the climate of the high desert was intensely hot by day and cold by night and the sand dunes were difficult, almost impossible, to traverse. The party was without specially designed vehicles or appropriate equipment and supplies and many men died on the journey which took one hundred days.

When we were leaving Washington for Dick to take up his appointment in the Middle East in April 1942, Paul Rosenberg who of necessity had little news of his son asked if we could discover where and how he was when he reached Cairo. We were able later to let him know that Alexandre had survived this miraculous journey and had passed through Egypt to join General Koenig's Seventh Division.

Many people in Washington and New York who had contributed money and personal service to the British and French in the First World War returned to help these countries when they were once more in trouble.

To some American supporters of the Allies it seemed to be the same war, which in reality it was.

Amongst the friends of France in both wars was Miss Elizabeth Hudson. In some ways she resembled my aunt Ada Scott. She had a grave unsmiling face with piercing eyes and a delicate yet authoritative aquiline nose. Her wit, of the highest quality, was unpredictable and thus a source of surprise and delight. In the second war she was also a sponsor and the treasurer of the American-British Art Centre in New York which was formed to give British artists a place to show their work when the galleries in London were closed in the Blitz. The brilliant and mercurial

New York

Austrian. Mrs Ala Story, was brought from London to become director of the gallery where works by Stanley Spencer and John Tunnard, amongst others, were exhibited for the first time in the United States.

In 1939 a collection of pictures covering one hundred and fifty years of Australian art was sponsored and assembled by the Australian Government and the Carnegie Corporation of the United States. It was to be taken to America and Canada for exhibition in various cities, twenty-nine in all. Professor Theodore Sizer, Director of the Yale University Gallery, a charming person universally known as Tubby, had come to Australia to advise in the choice of paintings that would be of special interest in North America.

Three hundred pictures accordingly arrived in New York to be surveyed by Directors, notably Alfred Barr and Monroe Wheeler, of the Museum of Modern Art which published the splendid catalogue. I was invited to help. The collection was divided into two parts for functional and other reasons and one hundred paintings were chosen for the first foreign exhibition held in the newly opened Mellon Gallery (now the National Gallery) in Washington in 1941.

Dick and I were able to lend some of our own paintings to strengthen the contemporary representation which was a little thin.

After the exhibition closed in Washington it was shown at Yale, and in New York at the Metropolitan Museum on the invitation of the Director, Francis Taylor, and the Trustees of the Museum. Particular interest was taken in the aboriginal bark drawings and the painting by Tom Roberts (1856-1931) 'Bailed up!' which was considered to be an outstanding example of its period, the eighteen nineties. Two of our own pictures have remained in New York: 'Monday Morning' by Russell Drysdale in the Metropolitan Museum, and 'The Kangaroo Hunt' by Peter Purves Smith (1912-1949) in the Museum of Modern Art.

New York had a social pattern of its own. In Washington nobody at that time wore evening clothes more formal than a black dinner jacket and the feminine equivalent. When we arrived

Tides and Eddies

at the first of our infrequent dinner parties in Manhattan, both of us modestly dressed in black, we found a blaze of tiaras and white ties.

This was in the house of Mr and Mrs Ogden Reid, owners of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and a fascinating dinner it was. Dorothy Thompson, the international correspondent, bright as a diamond, was welcomed back into the house after an absence. She was a strong and articulate friend of Britain when such friends were badly needed.

To our surprise at the end of dinner the evening turned itself into a forum for discussion. Mrs Reid, so beautiful and vivid, suggested the subject – the various aspects of the war – and all, still seated round the table, gave their somewhat divergent views in turn.

Before we left for the Middle East another such dinner was given in Dick's honour, this time in an atmosphere of complete concord. We were allies with a common purpose.

In Transit

After several false starts in early April the weather allowed us to leave New York by air for London on our way to the Middle East.

We said good-bye to Jimmie and Aileen Taylor at La Guardia airport. A few weeks later he was killed while testing a naval aircraft; it seems that a mechanical defect in one landing flap caused the machine to spin into the ground. On the day of his funeral his eldest son, Jim, joined the Navy Air Service.

Flying the Atlantic in 1942 in a Pan American Clipper was very different from the short casual operation it has since become. It was then an adventure or so it seemed to me. I thought of the long lonely flight over thousands of miles of water of Charles Lindberg fifteen years before in a single-engined aeroplane. Our own pilot was an experienced captain of forty-eight years; this reminded us that younger men had other tasks now than the flying of transport aircraft.

We came down at Bermuda and, because Mr Churchill was impatient for the arrival in London of Dick and three service officers, all other passengers were put off on this lovely island and extra fuel taken on so that we might overfly Horta in the Azores and land at Lisbon.

All through the night in a flight of sixteen and a half hours, excited by the prospects ahead, I found myself in a twilight zone of dozing urgently addressing all sorts of persons at the other end of the journey. In the morning I found that the other passengers had been doing the same thing. This mental activity was no doubt due to the height of eleven thousand feet at which we had flown without oxygen or pressurisation.

The airfield of Lisbon was, like Portugal itself, neutral ground.

Rooms on one side of the airport building were reserved for Germans and Italians; on the other side, for the Allies. I watched some enemy forms disappear in the distance with sharper interest even than I had felt at the sight of my first Germans on the train to Cologne in 1919. It appears that Portuguese neutrality was carefully observed and the aerodrome remained a safe and convenient landing place for all combatants.

Flying well west of Portugal we strained for the first sight of England. How would it be, how would it look, this loved and threatened island of which we had been thinking so constantly? The coast revealed itself gradually through a light mist and the morning became clear as we flew from Bristol to London noting the signs of defence and offence in the many airstrips on the way.

Londoners had become used to the wounds in their city, to one injury after another: gaping holes and ruins, the great areas of devastation in the city proper where St. Paul's Cathedral rose in its mighty beauty, visible from all sides, out of a sea of rubble.

But to newcomers the wreckage around us had the physical effect of the sight of a wounded body, a known body, flowing with blood. Though we knew that all this damage had taken place the first impact of it was totally unexpected and shocking.

After consultations in London Winston Churchill invited Dick and me to Chequers, the Elizabethan house in Buckinghamshire that was given by Lord Lee of Fareham in 1921 for use as a retreat by the Prime Ministers of England. It was the meeting place in wartime for diverse and important men where the continuous span at week-ends permitted plans to be developed, evening and morning, in an atmosphere of comparative quiet.

I looked with interest at the names in the visitors' books since the house had become the property of the Government. The quantity of names and the individuals represented were the skeleton of recent history as well as an indication of the personal character of the Prime Ministers. During the days of Ramsay Macdonald there were few guests excepting his family, C. B. Thomson and other personal friends. Later after C.B's death the name of Marthe Bibesco occurs several times, when she and the Prime Minister had come together over the loss of a loved friend.

During our first week-end at Chequers the house was filled with guests and their secretaries. On our arrival the men walked and talked on the lawn while Mrs Churchill and I sat on the terrace in the sun. She told me the true shape of some events which I had not understood. I gazed at her as she spoke and thought how beautiful she was sitting there in the spring sunlight: the head and carriage of a Greek statue, the lovely bones of her face, her brilliant blue eyes and lively laughing look. Not many women at that time wore hats but Mrs Churchill sometimes tied a loosely knit black snood over her head to tether her fair hair.

Afterwards when she walked towards him over the lawn where he was talking to the Polish General Sikorski, Mr Churchill's face lit up at the sight of her. 'Hullo, my duck!' he said. He had written truly in an early book, 'In 1908 I married and lived happily ever after.' But for neither of them, though the days were happy, can they often have been untroubled or without incident.

At dinner that night came one of the most anxious moments of my life. I was seated between Mr Churchill and Sir Stafford Cripps. Also at the table were General Sir Hastings Ismay, an old friend, and many more. Though no member of the Churchill family is speechless, Mr Churchill had no small talk and no interest in the use of it by others. His own speech was tremendous or he was silent. This formidable man expected the same intelligent range of thinking in those around him, therefore if they had nothing important to say they should not speak.

But, to return to my anxiety. During dinner Dick had left the room to make a live B.B.C. broadcast which was relayed to the Prime Minister through a small radio on the table in front of him. As Dick's speech began I watched Mr Churchill's beautiful hands – delicate yet strong with unusually long thumbs, the hands of a man of action as well as a thinker – with the miserable expectation that they might at some moment begin to drum on the table. But this did not happen and he turned to me at the end of the talk with a beaming smile of approval. He was pleased that Dick had become Minister of State and he was pleased with his first broadcast after the appointment.

Two of the Churchills' daughters were at Chequers also this

week-end. Both were lovely to look at but differed from each other. Sarah who was in the W.A.A.F. was small and elegant with bright red-gold hair. When this colouring occurred in his children Mr Churchill referred to it as their 'plumage'. Mary, in the A.T.S. looked like a rose, fresh and radiant.

Because we were newly come from the United States and Dick's broadcast had been approved, these two thought it might be useful for me to plead their cause with their father in something they both wanted to do – to go to America on a mission.

After dinner I sat next to Mr Churchill while we watched a technical war film. I glanced at him several times as he sat smoking and considered how I could possibly introduce the subject. Finally I said a few words about Americans and asked if he had thought about the usefulness of his daughters going on a short visit to the States. He looked at me sternly. 'Their place is here!' he said.

When Lord Lee had given Chequers to the nation he handed it over furnished and filled with paintings, objects of art and superb books. Amongst the historical relics in which Mr Churchill took particular interest was the death mask of Oliver Cromwell. It was an alarming imprint – powerful and rugged.

We found in London that a good deal of interest was taken in Dick's appointment to the Middle East. Though Field-Marshal Smuts was a member of the War Cabinet, he who had been an early enemy of Winston Churchill's in the Boer war and was not afraid of him as were some round the table, Dick was the only other member of a Dominion in the Cabinet. While Britons were very much aware of the contributions the Dominions and Colonies were making to the war effort, in the air, on the sea, on the ground, this appointment was something a little different.

When I went into Brigg's shop at St. James's Street to buy an umbrella (I cannot think why, as I was bound for Cairo where no rain falls) the woman who looked after me, on learning my name, said she had heard Dick's broadcast and added, 'This is like the opening of another window, this appointment of Mr Casey's!'

Few women at this time were permitted to accompany their husbands to the Middle East unless they held jobs in their own right. My permission to go there opened the door for several



Roman Emperor and M.C.

Cecil Beaton



Lady Louis Mountbatten

J. C. Patel



Misir in Calcutta



Jane and Donn in the Mofussil

Pat Jarrett

others. One of these was Lady Tedder, Australian wife of Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, A.O.C., R.A.F., Middle East, who more than justified her presence in Egypt before she died in an air crash at Heliopolis in 1943.

Dick saw many people in the fifteen days of preparation he had in London. I also, though mine were of a different kind. For the moment I was a potential link between the Middle East and England for some associations and persons, amongst these parents who had sons fighting in the western desert. Letters were infrequent; because of events their flow tended to dry up completely.

On April 27th Dick left on a direct flight to Cairo via Plymouth, Gibraltar and Malta. I was sent in a flying boat from Foynes in Southern Ireland by an oblique route round the west coast of Africa.

A fuelling stop was at Bathurst, the coastal city of Gambia, the long thin river strip of country that pierced into French West Africa.

For the first time I saw with enchantment the indigo coloured clothes of the figures that moved over the light soil and under the green, orange-tipped, palms. Every shade of that metallic and aristocratic blue, the blue of the Kashmiri sapphire, was there from its depth in the newly dyed stuffs to ice pallor in faded or washed-out garments.

Our flying boat circled the coast to the bony city of Lagos in Nigeria. We took off inland from here in doubtful weather in an old German Fokker aircraft clothed in corrugated metal. The pilot climbed to eighteen thousand feet in an effort to surmount a solid front, but the ceiling of both plane and passengers had been reached (once again there was no oxygen) and we returned to Lagos shivering and half alive. The passengers, who had mostly come from England, were badly equipped for hours in an aircraft where it nearly always becomes cold. They wore tropical shorts and seemed to have no coats. They carried gas masks.

I have since thought what a miracle it was that I should have had the opportunity to see, if only for one short hour, the fabled city of Kano in northern Nigeria. I was driven round it by one of the R.A.F. officers who was stationed there while our Fokker was refuelled.

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Its houses were unique. They had long ears rising from their corners, though no one was able to tell me why. The walls of the houses were of highly polished cocoa-coloured earth and were sometimes covered with decorative squiggles in white. Once again the blue notes of indigo were insistent in this desert landscape.

A huge walled-in compound was set in space within the city, as it were a city inside a city, and as we watched, a procession of sheiks in flowing white robes rode out on Arab horses through its gates.

When we left Maiduguri, south-west of Lake Chad, looking toward Fort Lamy as we headed for Khartoum, we must have followed from the air the same route that Alexandre Rosenberg and his party traversed so slowly and dangerously over the desert. Sometimes in the folds of the sand below us we perceived small black dots that might have been the tents of Bedouins or even the trucks of the French party, though more likely they were nothing at all that belonged to human beings.

From Khartoum the river Nile, sunk between broad green banks of fertile land, wound in and out of our vision until once more after an interval of twenty-eight years I saw the city of Cairo, not as I had seen it before, piecemeal, but spread out in breadth beneath us like a map.

Cairo

(1942 - 44)

The Cairo of our past was well behind us. Dick had known the city in his youth on the way to Gallipoli in the manner that many Australians were to know it again. But his purpose now was very different. His task in the Middle East was 'to represent the War Cabinet in the area and to act in its name'. The countries in this area included Egypt, Libya, Malta, Palestine, Syria and the Lebanon, Cyprus, Trans Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Aden, the Persian Gulf territories, Sudan, Ethiopia.

Seven miles south-west of Cairo lie the tremendous pyramids of Giza and north of these on the desert road to Alexandria was a property owned by Mr Chester Beatty, known for his interest in art and his superb collection of Indian miniatures. He had generously loaned this villa, Beit el Azrak, for the use of the Minister of State and we occupied it after Oliver Lyttleton, whom Dick succeeded. It was a smallish white house of five bedrooms built round an azure blue courtyard. The grounds were enclosed by a thicket of dark casuarina trees, the Australian river oak, high and plume-like. Exceedingly hot and airless in summer, when it was normally unoccupied, the villa was a haven for mosquitoes, which huddled together in mats in four immense black pottery jars in the patio, waiting to emerge whining in the dusk.

Upstairs at the front of the house was another great splash of blue, a wide open terrace where we sat at night looking out over the trees towards the stars for there was no other view, hearing sometimes fragments of song from convoys that passed by on their way to Alexandria and the front. Around the house, lawns of pale grass were kept short by small boys in long white dresses who trimmed them by hand, while in a compound by the front gates

roses and tuberose grew in neat formation throughout the year for the decoration of the villa. There were always roses on the dining-room table, not the rich dewy flower of England and Australia but something smaller and drier, though very sweet.

Our house and grounds were protected by Gurkha guards who were quick and fierce in movement and seemingly did not distinguish one European face from another. If either of us or our drivers had forgotten the pass-word (Theek Hai) a bayonet was pushed through the car window on the passenger's side. At first Dick rejected the idea of a guard on our house and the Egyptian outriders who accompanied him wherever he drove. He was persuaded however that the political implications of assassination in a foreign country went beyond the death of an individual. Lord Moyne, a dear and gentle man, who became Dick's deputy and afterwards succeeded him as Resident Minister, had the same dislike of protection. He dispensed with it a few months after we left and he and his driver Corporal Fuller were shot dead by a member of the Jewish Stern Gang who was concealed in his garden.

The war situation was not encouraging when we arrived in Egypt in May 1942. The emphasis was on defence and not on attack. Soon there were several changes in command and planning. At one time the defence of Cairo and the Nile delta was contemplated rather than a stand farther away in the western desert and it became clear that our villa was on the wrong side of the defending line.

Apart from the possibility of the enemy advancing down our road from Alexandria (and they came within seventy miles of it) it took time that could not be spared to drive between Cairo and Mena. Dick leased a small flat, near to his crowded office in the city, which we used by day and occasionally by night.

The Prime Minister of Egypt at this time was Nahas Pasha. He was closely associated with the British Ambassador Sir Miles Lampson and was dominated by him. King Farouk on the other hand had attractive Italian friends and no liking for the British or the Allied cause.

The mixed people of Cairo, most of them illiterate, impover-

ished and under-nourished, were concerned with their own lives and hardships and thought little about the foreigners amongst them except as a source of employment and money. They were indifferent to the war. Sharper interest was taken in it by the merchants of the Muski, the network of narrow earthen streets where craftsmen and tradesmen and shopkeepers worked and lived. Merchants and money-lenders might be seen sitting at tables in the bazaar drinking Turkish coffee and smoking pipes, some bending their crimson fez-covered heads towards chessboards or dominoes while radio blared out German and Italian propaganda in French.

It was said that Egypt resembled 'a *poule de luxe* envisaging a possible change of protector'.

The Muski was a sounding board and Dick and I were aware that our occasional visits to it were noted and commented on in gossip passing softly by mouth. When the war position was dark and the Germans were advancing towards Alexandria I did a little thoughtful shopping in the bazaars as if there were all the time in the world to enjoy the porcelain hands of Fatima and the silver Turkish candlesticks with high glass shades etched in gold.

It also seemed appropriate at this time for us to build a swimming pool near the villa. Tiles had been left in storage by the Beattys and they were glad to have them used for this purpose. A stream of young Egyptians, cheerful at being employed, built us another great area of blue, bluer still under deep water than on the wide edges.

On a concrete patch near the roofless dressing-rooms overhung by date palms, Bernard Freyberg, the great New Zealand General who came infrequently to Cairo from the western desert, placed the imprint of his hand.

How many figures I remember standing at the end of the azure pool poised for a dive, clear-cut in time; lean young men, taut and prepared for their tasks, Julian and Henry Brooke and David Bland whom we were never to see again. Older and long-lived figures for a moment stood equally revealed, the bare image of themselves, divested of their clothing, of their rank.

A curly-haired young woman of twenty-six, whose lovely

sparkling face could become remote, turned a few expert cart-wheels on the grass before she paused in stillness at the end of the pool. She was Frederika, Crown Princess of Greece, clever, warm-hearted, true, with a streak of steel inherited from her royal Prussian forebears.

Crown Prince Paul had taken her and their children to South Africa after the invasion of Greece but they came sometimes to stay at Alexandria and thence to Cairo. Their hearts were in their return to Greece but in the meantime they gathered strength and philosophy from their host, Field-Marshal Smuts. This great man's feet were in the past while his head with its pale brilliant eyes looked into the future. He said to Dick, 'When you have been out of your country for a while, for whatever purpose, you will find it hard to go back. You will have to begin again there from the bottom. I know because I have done it'.

The Egyptians at the villa – our major-domo Abdul and his accomplished French wife Betty, our house servants each wearing a tasselled crimson fez and long white or coloured dresses tied in the middle, like those of children, by brilliant sashes, the boys who plucked our pale lawns – were pleasant persons, willing, and eager to laugh. Egyptian friends however would tell us that they came of a temperamental race capable in a street encounter or accident of flaring into ugly moods, which might again be turned to laughter if anyone knew how to touch the mood.

During the anxious weeks after our arrival in Cairo there was never a hint from our staff at the villa of change of attitude towards ourselves. They might be indifferent to the course of the war but they did not withdraw themselves from us. Perhaps the building of the swimming pool gave them confidence and a new interest.

When we arrived in the Middle East we had no friends there and few acquaintances. Friends had to be filed out of the solid. Dick was a comparatively unknown Australian and a politician, a creature that is often suspect. He came at a time when the war was going badly and Rommel was the hero of the western desert, when nerves were sensitive and individuals tended to disagree.

Cairo (1942-1944)

Among the first persons to become our friends were the Walter Smarts. He was Oriental Minister to the British Embassy, married to the painter, Amy Nimr, whose father Dr Fares Nimr Pasha was the senior Egyptian newspaper owner, and whose brother-in-law George Antonius had written the important book *The Arab Awakening* (1938).

We came together through death.

The only son of my cousin David Scott, and the only grandchild of my aunt Ada Scott, had been killed in 1941 at Buq Buq in the western desert. On leave in Cairo he had stayed with the Smarts. Smartie was a gentle perceptive man of high quality; in his slender elegance he somewhat resembled C. B. Thomson. Amy was unique, an individual whose world of thought was wider, deeper, more surprising than the world of most of us of Anglo-Saxon stock, even with an admixture of Celtic blood.

Merlin Scott had played with their small boy, Micky, and he had talked to Amy, so easily, revealing something of the thoughts of a young man of twenty-two involved in war. He had no fear. He was self-reliant, independent, and like many of his forebears was happy with a pencil in his hand. I discovered afterwards for myself, meeting his friends here and there, sometimes in hospital, that in his short life Merlin had left an imprint on them that they believed would remain to strengthen them.

The brilliant little Micky, Merlin's playfellow, was soon also to die by violence. He went with Amy one day to a picnic at Helouan where he picked up a small stick bomb lying in the sand and it exploded in his hand. Of the unassuageable deaths of Micky and later of Smartie Amy cried, 'They left me, both of them, without even a wave of the hand'.

On May 27th the enemy attacked at Gazala on the coast. The Free French Forces under General Koenig, who fought so splendidly inland to the south at Bir Hacheim, withdrew from there on June 10th and on the 20th Tobruk fell. On June 30th began a run on the Cairo banks, and Foreign Legations and some civil organisations were evacuated on July 1st. This day became

known as Ash Wednesday from the burning of G.H.Q. papers that might have fallen usefully into enemy hands.

The 9th Australian Division had come down from Syria, bareheaded, because it was thought that the digger hats would give their movements away although in truth they still looked like Australians, hats or no hats. Originally intended for the defence of Cairo this division was finally ordered forward to El Alamein where it took part in the holding of the Germans on July 2nd, the first time in this drive by the enemy that the initiative passed into Allied hands.

The long advance of the Germans had so strung out their lines of communication and supply that they could not take advantage of this supreme opportunity to follow on rapidly. The check gave the allies a breathing space in which to re-organise.

At this time a woman who was to become a loved friend came into our lives. She was Lady Spears, wife of General Sir Edward Spears, British Minister to Syria and the Lebanon, and was in charge of the Hadfield-Spears mobile hospital of a hundred beds, accredited to the Free French Forces. Hers was the only hospital then operating in battle areas that included women: nurses and drivers. In the first world war Mary Spears had directed a hospital for the French at her own expense; in the second war it was financed by Sir Robert and Lady Hadfield and, after the collapse of France, by funds collected in America for French Relief, made available through Leslie Benson (wife of Colonel Rex Benson, British Military Attaché in Washington) who represented the British War Relief Society in New York.

After the fall of Tobruk Mary Spears had come to Egypt with her hospital on instructions from the 8th Army. She had taken the personal decision to obey the instructions of the Army itself rather than those of her immediate superior, the French Command within the Army.

She and I sat with others on our blue terrace in the moonlight during the last week of July. She was a smallish woman in uniform with dark brown hair parted in the middle. The exquisite bony structure of her pale face narrowed towards her chin and her green eyes were deeply set. Her voice was highly individual; there

Cairo (1942-1944)

was authority in its clear dragging tones and an occasional undercurrent of laughter.

The enemy had been checked at El Alamein but there was much ahead. Mary and I both spoke the same words at the same moment: 'If the drive against the Germans is possible it will be done, but of course if it is impossible it will be done just the same'.

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I had to consider what I could do most usefully at such a time as this. My first responsibility was to look after Dick, and the many persons who came to the villa to talk and consult in the evenings. I was interested also to meet together and exchange ideas with the women heads of services in the area; the Matron-in-Chief, the senior officers of the W.R.E.N.S., the A.T.S., the W.A.A.F., the Red Cross, and other bodies. There was another service of limitless value spread throughout the Middle East. This was the War Services branch of the Y.W.C.A. guided by the dynamic New Zealander, Miss Jean Begg. Her workers and depots were at every point of action, at the service of anyone who needed help, from refugees to Lieutenant-Generals. Jean Begg herself combined a bracing forthright charm, that no man or woman of any race could resist, with the cunning of the serpent. If she decided on a certain plan of action, however astonishing, it became possible, even easy, to achieve.

Before leaving London I had been asked by Sir Ian Fraser of St Dunstons (now Lord Fraser of Lonsdale) to become chairman of the small St Dunstons unit in Cairo which helped and instructed newly blinded servicemen in hospital.

I found that the first and overpowering emotion of the newly blinded was fear of dependence on others. This was a threat they could not accept – anything but that. As soon as they were well enough they would get up at a time of night when there were few persons about so that no one should guide their steps or help them to wash. In seeking independence they wanted to talk to someone who had the time to listen. They wanted to think aloud.

The idea of going to St Dunstons filled most of them with foreboding. They thought of it as an institution with all that this

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word can suggest. I was able to tell them that St Dunstons was in fact a kind of university through which they could graduate. It was a magnificent and ingenious school that would teach them how to become a slightly different kind of creature, but a complete one with almost unlimited opportunities.

One man of thirty-seven, Bert Baldwin of the Royal Engineers, was blinded and lost both fore-arms in 1942 in an explosion on a desert minefield. He was a restless, intelligent man that nothing could stay.

When we were in London a few years later, a voice on the telephone at the Ritz Hotel greeted me with, 'It's Bert here, Mrs Casey!' I said, 'Bert? Oh! BERT! But how did you find me, how did you know I was here?' Said he, 'I tried all the posh hotels until I got you! I'm a telephonist now at St Dunstan's headquarters'.

This was the least of his achievements. He learned to play the vibraphone, he bred budgerigars, and he was the first blind handless man to play darts. He gripped the darts with a pair of automatic tweezers tipped with rubber attached to his artificial arm. The only help he needed was to be led to the board. He took three paces back and then threw with uncanny skill. After a while Bert Baldwin left his switchboard to take up weaving on a brilliantly ingenious loom constructed for him.

A man blinded at the age of twenty in Tunisia is Colin Beaumont-Edwards M.C. who spent some time in hospital in Cairo where he learned Braille in a miraculously short time. He also fast learned the art of teaching the sighted when he had need of them, as well as when he had no need of them. After training at St Dunstons he studied economics at Oxford and went on the Imperial Metal Industries (Kynoch) Ltd. As I write he and his wife have become Mayor and Mayoress of Sutton Coldfield.

Having surmounted the great challenge of blindness, it seemed that many blinded men went on to overcome more obstacles than did the sighted. They had tried their strength and it had given them confidence and the excitement of initiative.

Some disabilities appear as a protection, a needed citadel, for gifted persons. The deaf are able to develop their inner life in the undisturbed enclosure of their minds. The asthmatic Marcel

Proust found in the seclusion of a quiet room the extension of time his masterpiece demanded.

The St Dunstons unit had brought me into hospitals. I realised that not only were blinded men glad to have someone to talk to but so were many of the seriously wounded who were unable to be evacuated from Egypt. The hospitals were crowded, and in the proportion of forty-four nurses to four hundred patients. There was a good deal a visitor could do. The Australian Red Cross gave me supplies for the occasional Australians who found themselves in Cairo hospitals, cases who needed special treatment or were too ill to be moved.

Those who were lying in wards in a stifling atmosphere where wounds healed slowly, where there was yet no penicillin or similar drug to hasten their recovery, felt forgotten and out of the world. Sometimes an important visitor would come to see a particular patient but his stay was short and he had no time to pause or even to glance at those who looked wistfully towards him as he passed them by.

The officers' ward in the 63rd General Hospital at Helouan was filled by very sick men with infected wounds. They lay and suffered in the heat for months with patience high above praise. One day Mr Kirk, the United States Minister to Egypt, came with me to see a young American, Charles Bolte, who had joined an English regiment in London and had lost a leg in the western desert.

We had first known of Alexander Kirk when we inspected his empty house in Washington as a possible alternative to the one that became the Australian Legation. It was a huge strange block of a house. An immense, very beautiful, pale room, furnished round the walls by deep divans, suggested an unusual owner and stirred my curiosity; and indeed we found Alexander to be a most unusual man, very tall, thin, erect, good-looking with a rather impenetrable face, witty, fastidious, at the same time full of courage and initiative. He became a most co-operative friend in war circumstances and talked as freely to Dick as Dick to him. It was a relationship of mutual trust.

Having once braced himself for the visit, this sensitive man went many times again to hospitals. The appearance of his tall

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upright figure, faultlessly dressed in white, and the particular flavour of his speech brought a pleasure and interest into entire wards that no movie star could have exceeded. He was also the visible sign of American co-operation. Dear Alexander.

Cecil Beaton, who was in Cairo in 1942 for the Ministry of Information, came with me to the 9th General Hospital in Heliopolis where bad chest cases and burns were treated, and where plastic surgeons slowly restored mutilated faces and limbs – oh, so slowly – bringing up long sausages of flesh from other parts of the body to fill in hollows; removing them replacing, shaping, darning, with the tenderness and care of an embroiderer creating a work of art, stitch by stitch. Cecil Beaton had not wanted to come to this hospital; he thought of himself as an intruder though in fact he was a welcome diversion to men who had few diversions, saw few persons other than their busy surgeons and nurses, and had no mirrors.

I had known of Cecil as a photographer of beautiful women, which tended to intimidate me. I found a person quite unlike my expectations, a serious man whose perceptions reached with compassion beyond skin or flesh towards the creature concealed inside. His visit was such a success and so long talked of that when General Montgomery came to stay with us at Mena in 1943 I was asked by the hospital if he would consider spending an hour or so there to cheer the patients. He had replaced Rommel as the hero of the desert campaigns; the wounded in these sad wards longed to see him. Though he had come to Cairo for a few days' rest, and spent most of his time sitting on our lawn, Montgomery was delighted by this invitation.

I went with him – but not through the wards. I followed well behind him picking up the comments and the stir of encouragement that flowed from his crisp presence.

At this time I learned something of the attitude of mind of a good many men, particularly B.O.R.'s (British Other Ranks) towards the future. Lying in hospital they had time to think. In 1943 I wrote to several friends in London to tell them that I believed the next British general election would be won by the Labour party.

This was in no sense a rejection of Winston Churchill. One and all they thought him a miraculous leader, but they did not think of him primarily as a Conservative as the government at that time was a coalition. Their minds were moving ahead to the time when the war would be over. Their diverse lives in the services had given them unusual experiences of places and persons and whoever they were, wounded in hospital or prisoners of war newly returned, they were beginning to question some aspects of the life they had been accustomed to in the past.

Winston Churchill, travelling as Colonel Warden, came several times to Cairo while we were there. First, in August 1942 when General Montgomery, on the death in action of General Gott, had taken over command of the 8th Army, and General Sir Harold Alexander was appointed Commander-in-Chief, Middle East. This was the moment of drastic changes in command, of reorganisation of troops, of the acceleration of supplies from Britain and America. Soon after came the allied drive forward, the turn of the tide.

Colonel Warden came again to Cairo for the conference with President Roosevelt in late 1943. He stayed at our villa and bathed in our pool.

We still had mosquitoes at the villa in spite of our efforts to dispel them and had to go to bed tucked tightly under frail gossamer-fine nets darned by Abdul's Betty. Mr Churchill, finding it difficult to untuck himself in the morning, with his usual direct approach to an obstacle put his hands together and dived through his cage.

During this visit he said to me suddenly, of the war, 'I'm old. But I'm not too old, am I? I'll last it out'. It was impossible to consider him in terms of age.

So strong was Mr Churchill's sense of perspective that years later in 1961 when Mr Macmillan, then Prime Minister of Britain, asked him, 'What are you doing at the moment, Winston? Writing? Painting?' he replied, 'No, I'm waiting'.

I had been asked to inspect the Spink Villa, north of ours on the road to Alexandria, ostensibly for our children but really for its occupation by Celestes (General Chiang-Kai-Shek) and his lady

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who was his interpreter and attended all conferences. The General had his own form of communication with those who did not speak his language; it was a series of high metallic sounds, charming and bird-like, which had their own emphasis and shadow of meaning.

Mme Chiang-Kai-Shek was a powerful regal woman but she was capable of charming as well as alarming. Her jade earrings exceeded in beauty and translucence the deepest blue-green emeralds I have ever seen. Sarah Oliver, who was attached to her father's staff as a W.A.A.F. officer, and I were deputed to buy her a present on behalf of the Prime Minister. We chose from the Muski a small, very old, bronze Egyptian cat.

During the period of this conference I saw for the second time in my life, Lord Louis Mountbatten who had just become Supreme Commander, South East Asia. The first time I had seen him was as a midshipman late in the first world war. He had stood for a moment, alert as a viking, at the top of the inside stairway of what was then Rumpelmeyer's tea-rooms in St James's Street (now Pruniers). His looks were so unusual and impressive that his young image had remained clear-cut in my mind. Meeting him personally in Cairo after this interval of years his past and present images came together for one instant of time in the way that shapes come together through the focusing of a camera. He and his wife were to become our friends as well as associates in war.

Our children had arrived in Egypt via Casablanca just before the Cairo conference. In spite of the devoted care of Mrs Christopher Squire (now Mrs John Massey of Sydney) and their nurse Cora Hancock in Washington, Alice Acheson felt that they were both becoming waif-like through their separation from us. There was less risk now in travelling by sea so Mr Dean Acheson, Assistant Secretary of State, generously made their return to us possible. He arranged for them to come on a military transport with a ship-load of American troops bound for West Africa and Italy.

Jane and Donn now aged fourteen and eleven were the only children on board. I think they enjoyed the voyage as they were a source of diversion to their fellow travellers, but they seemed

never to have gone to bed and arrived with us completely exhausted, covered with American regimental badges, and so pro-American as to be anti-British. They had also built up a sense of resentment towards us for having left them behind – as we had to, when we went to the Middle East.

During the two years we were in Cairo we had little opportunity to see anything of Egypt beyond what we observed in passing through roads and streets to our particular destinations.

As I travelled to the hospitals in the city itself, in its distant suburbs, in the Canal zone, my eyes were pressed on to the shifting landscape to make sure I would not forget it when the day came for it to vanish from my sight perhaps for ever.

I looked at the tortuous banyan trees and the giant eucalypts that grew along the banks of the Nile, their roots in the water drawing up sustenance for their tremendous bulk of trunk and bough. I saw the delicate foliage of the loofah trees decorating the pale cross streets running towards the river: farther away the beginning of the rolling sands of the desert: sometimes the hills enclosing the Toura caves that Napoleon had used in the days of his occupation of Egypt, caves that the R.A.F. were now employing as repair depots for their damaged aircraft.

In the passing landscape the life of the people was set – in movement through the slow and rhythmic progress of camels bearing loads of lucerne, through donkeys, horses, young men in long white dresses and white caps walking hand in hand, women in black shuffling along with veiled faces; in sound through the tinkling of bells, the hooting of cars, laughter and shouts, quavering cries, and the sound above all sounds, the muezzin from a minaret calling the faithful to prayer.

Once in the Muski I saw a man lying apparently dying in a narrow street. Nobody stopped by him or showed any interest in his condition. He might have been a withered vegetable. Life was too hard for the passers-by to take on an added burden and the risk of infection. I managed to persuade a reluctant policeman to have him removed to safety in a hospital.

Prince Mahommed Ali, the heir apparent at that time to the

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throne of King Farouk, gave me an Oriental explanation of this attitude towards the poor and sick. He said, 'This is a dispensation of Providence which removes those who are least needed. It is the poor and the weak who die by famine and disease, making more room for the strong and necessary'.

This ageing bearded Prince was a man of great charm and authority and he had an impish wit. 'You ask me where are my dogs?' he said to me one day. 'They are making wow-wow round the horses!'

On his right hand Prince Mahommed Ali wore an immense cabochon emerald ring, as large as one of Mme Chiang-Kai-Shek's jade earrings. Each time I shook hands with him my fingers lingered over the bulge of the emerald. He explained that this jewel represented for him an act of virtue. Its purchase had been a financial sacrifice.

He took great interest in our Australian flora; he was proud of the great eucalypts by the river, twice the size of any we had at home, and his own garden grew our casuarinas and shrubs and flowers in happy profusion.

When the war tension eased Amy Smart showed me a little of the village life of Egypt.

On one of the veins of the river Nile, a brown current flecked with blue from the sky that ran north of Cairo towards the sea, the Nimrs had a farm named Nashart. It was traversed by narrow canals accented here and there with wheels turned by the plodding of the plum-purple buffalo, the Gemuse. Amy and I rode in single file along the sandy edges bordered by lush green, I on an Arab stallion surprisingly well behaved. Since the Coblenz days of my Arab mare I had loved Arab horses for their gay and proud demeanour, their fidgety silky paces, their tender mouths, even for the occasional flick by their tails.

We rode through the narrow earth streets of a village by the stream where the little hand of Fatima hung sometimes on painted doors. (Fatima, daughter of the Prophet.) Now and again the dwellers in the houses, women in dark robes with children around them, would come out to greet Amy, looking long at my blue

eyes. The people in these villages seemed better off and sturdier than they were in the crowded areas of Cairo. Their lives were easier, food more abundant and where the river flowed its passing traffic brought interest and variety.

The fellahin are hospitable and courteous persons; the greater must greet the less. The horseman greets the rider on the donkey, the rider on the donkey the man on foot and so on down to the child and finally the beast.

One early morning Amy and I mounted to the unique village of Sandalla, on a high pile of rock and earth man-made by the Romans at one time as a look-out over the flat delta. It appeared to me as a tiny edition of the great monolith of Ayers Rock, five miles round at the base, in Central Australia. But Ayers Rock is so angled that it has a dark side where no sun reached and here the aboriginal women of a vanished tribe lived while the men lived on the right side.

Sandalla village was set on the top of the hill facing all ways and a narrow street circled it closely. I looked down some hundreds of feet as my stallion pranced light-heartedly as near as possible to the edge. The houses there, like most dwellings in Egypt, were built of earth. They seemed to grow out of the soil. Roofs were piled with pale straw, gold against the dark walls. But there was no need for roofs except for storage as no rain fell.

While I stayed for three nights with Amy at Nashart I drew the head of her handsome Nimr nephew, as the base for a poster I made to collect money from British servicemen in sums equivalent to a shilling, for St Dunstons. He had a sensitive resolute face. I made him close his eyes.

I was shown another aspect of Egyptian life by Dr Isabel Garvice, Inspector of Girls' Schools in Cairo. She was an Australian widow who lived beyond our villa on the road to Alexandria.

The Egyptian child, girl or boy, up to the age of seven is cleverer and more advanced than most children under that age in other countries. After seven the upward curve seems to flatten out. The little Egyptian girls were ravishing to look at. Under their thick dark lashes the whites of their eyes, and their teeth

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gleaming as they sang, took on the bluish tint of a thrush's egg against their pale gold skin. For the first time I listened to music and singing in a tonal range to which European ears are seldom accustomed. The notes seemed to slide about so subtly that one's ear was unable to isolate or define them. We were to hear similar sounds from voice and instrument later on in Bengal.

I would have liked to write in this book of many persons who became friends – persons I liked and respected, and sometimes loved. I would like to scatter them through the pages like jewels, taking pleasure in their achievements, their character, their voices, their looks. But I must write only of those who seem relevant to my text, who have in some way contributed to the stream I am trying to follow, a stream on which passengers have a positive place and a measure of contact one with the other.

One figure well in the stream was our daschshund Misr. I chose him from a litter of puppies at the time of the Flap (the period that culminated in Ash Wednesday) to protect us from the Germans. He came to us with his mother's milk wet on his lips, and his first baby action was to growl at our Gurkha guard. He was black, with tan markings that were particularly effective as eyebrows and on his back-view, and he had shining ebony toe-nails. His shape was not very good for a show dog but it was strong and practical and he had a lovely intelligent head with eyes the colour of wall-flower. Misr's father had come from India and his mother from Vienna; she was described as a good worker. He led his own life at times; it was carefully organised and no human being had the power to deflect it though he lent us his presence in small quantities, seeming to know when it was helpful for him to appear. As a puppy he would dance in the clear Egyptian moonlight, but only in the moonlight, leaping and snarling at his moving shadow. While he had a tolerant kindness towards most persons he did not develop attachments. His only hint of affection was shown to our daughter Jane, and to Margaret Gilruth, my secretary in Cairo, a gay charming courageous fey creature. I can still see Misr lolling back in her arms, his front paws flopping.

While the young Misr danced in the moonlight, strange

Tides and Eddies

creatures moved in the sun. Outside my bedroom window stood a small compact tree, round like those that a child draws. Amongst its thick green leaves grew masses of orange coloured blossoms. As I looked out on it one morning I saw with horror that the flowers were beginning to move and change places. I was transfixed. Then I perceived a marmalade cat moving cautiously along the top of the tree with a kitten in her mouth. This was the safe home of her litter, her orange litter, tucked in amongst the strong leaves and orange flowers of the tree.

Soon after the Cairo conference Dick received a cable from Mr Churchill offering him the governorship of Bengal which had become vacant through the death in Calcutta of Sir John Herbert, and was particularly important on account of war and famine. The Prime Minister stressed the fact that the office of Minister of State was inevitably diminishing in importance through the development of the war which in late 1943 was moving away from the Middle East. 'The military juice was out of it.' He suggested submitting Dick's name to the King for a peerage.

We got out a map of India and studied it apprehensively. A few days before the cable arrived Jean Begg, who knew India, had said to us, 'I wonder who will be the next governor of Bengal? I can't say I envy him. I can't imagine anything worse!'

Palestine

While Dick was in Cairo he visited many of the countries of the Middle East that came into his field of interest but not at once. Though he went to the battle areas soon after his arrival in April, it was September before he was able to go to Palestine. I flew with him to the Lydda airfield, thirty miles from Jerusalem.

When I thought of Palestine I saw again the great head of Sir Alfred Mond in the House of Commons dining-room, and heard his heavy voice stressing the conviction that Palestine should become not only, in the terms of the Balfour Declaration, 'a national home for the Jewish people' but the re-establishment of the Jewish nation and the focus for the Jewish spirit in the world. This purpose was at length achieved in 1948 when the British ended their Mandate and the Jewish Agency declared the State of Israel to be established.

I thought also of a series of large water-colours I had seen of Jews of Jerusalem painted by Amy Smart, male heads of noble construction hung round with long feminine ringlets. These were the descendants of the Jews who had remained behind to wail beside the outer wall of the city when most of those of their religion dispersed to other countries. Because of their pronounced features and peculiar dress this small section of men seemed a race apart. Many Jews however whom we saw throughout Palestine and later in Baghdad were much like the Arabs in appearance.

From the air Palestine was a pale bony country, eroded to the point of skeletal survival. The hills rose up like the carcasses of gigantic animals picked clean of flesh. The earth and vegetation, the green richness of the days of the Bible, had gone. But there was a rarefied beauty in this rocky terrain that lay between the Mediterranean and the cleft of water that flowed from the

mountains of Syria to form the lake of Galilee, and on through the river Jordan into the Dead Sea. We almost thought of this bare land as an emanation of the spirit. So much of the great human thought of the world had sprung from this isolated region that it could not be observed with a casual eye. All that lay around us was touched by the reflection of its spiritual past, its passionate history.

We were aware of the weight of religion in Jerusalem, religious thought that created divisions greater than those of race. The Jewish, Muslim and Christian creeds were crystallised in the Wailing Wall of the dispossessed Jews, in the Mosque of Aqsa beside the Dome of the Rock whence, it is recorded, Mohammed took flight for Heaven on his magic horse, and in the path of Christ with the Cross.

I remembered some passages in C. B. Thomson's book *Smaranda*. In the first world war when the resistance of the Turks collapsed, the keys of Jerusalem were handed over to the British by the frail old Turkish Mayor of the Holy City as a token of surrender. C.B., who was present, wrote that there were several keys in the bunch, large, quite ordinary but very clean, no doubt 'the keys of all the creeds'.

The walled city of Jerusalem was like an island circled by a growing city outside. Its lanes were dark, narrow, mysterious, with small almost secret doors opening from them into tiny courtyards. Its dwellings were overcrowded with people. The cobble stones were so worn that you could close your eyes and see the naked feet of the past stumbling over them, as you saw a shadowy hand stretched towards the ancient olive trees that were twisted like old human bodies into the agony of distortion.

We stayed a few nights with the British High Commissioner, Sir Harold MacMichael, in a handsome modern building that crouched like a lion on a rise looking towards the blue slit of the Dead Sea. He was a distinguished and erudite man with the head of a watchful noble bird. He introduced us to the Middle East books of Freya Stark and gave me the Blue Paper on Palestine to read. Below his residence, on the steep hillside of the valley outside Jerusalem that looked towards Mount Zion and the mountains of Moab, lay the Ophthalmic Hospital of St John. In

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1882 the Order had been given an old Arab house (the House of the Drum) by the Sultan of Turkey and here it established the famed hospital for the treatment of eye diseases.

While we were in the Middle East the Matron of the hospital was Dick's cousin, Gwen Peyton Jones. With her we looked at the extraordinary mixture of human beings assembled hopefully in the pillared and vaulted out-patient department: Arabs, Ethiopians, Spanish Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Syrians. Many of them came from far away, shepherds and fellahin, Bedouins and Druses, even prisoners under police escort. Patient creatures lay immobile in the wards with their eyes bandaged after operations, their dark faces appearing curiously pallid. Some who were allowed to move about sat in groups in the Mulberry courtyard, led there by a patient with at least one seeing eye. We were told that during the war Arab and Jewish girls worked together harmoniously as nurses.

This hospital has disappeared. It stood in No Man's Land between a Jewish suburb and Arab-held ground and became a battlefield after the British Mandate to Palestine was given up. It was gutted and abandoned although its work has been carried on elsewhere.

We travelled with Sir Harold MacMichael over parts of Palestine, finishing up with the brilliant male idea of lunching on the edge of what was then the Hula swamp. We sat under a notice in several languages which read: 'Malarial Area. Keep Away'. I returned to Cairo to develop malignant malaria which nearly killed me.

One vivid memory of Palestine was not of the country itself but of passing foreigners on its soil.

Before the Australian 9th Division, commanded by General Morshead, left the Middle East in late 1942 to return to Australia it paraded at Gaza on a wide strip of unusually green land near the coast. We sat on a platform in the sunlight behind General Alexander who took the salute.

Something like 14,000 men marched past us in long almost impeccably straight lines, wearing their cocked hats with swagger.

We had never seen a marching line so long and so well held. When the occasional music ceased the men walked to the faint squeaks of their new issue of light tan boots, moving proudly and lightly over the grass.

At the end of his short address to the assembled Division General Alexander told them: 'I knew you could fight. I did not know you could march like this'.

After the parade Lady Tedder and I left with the Spears by air for the Lebanon by way of Syria.

As we landed to refuel at the Damascus airfield our aircraft made a violent and dangerous ground-loop. I saved myself from being hurled back into the tail of the aeroplane by grabbing the nearest object which happened to be Sir Edward Spears' right leg. His first remark when the aircraft came to rest, facing some vague direction, was: 'There is someone unlucky on board! I can feel it. I am not going on to Beirut by air'.

This unusual man, so talented, so sensitive to atmosphere, gave me the uneasy conviction that he must be right. I was much relieved when he arranged for us all to travel by car to Beirut. I only hoped it was not I who had the evil eye. I considered the little hand of Fatima as a talisman against it.

Syria and the Lebanon

General Sir Edward Spears had been Winston Churchill's personal representative to the French Government. He returned to England with General de Gaulle in June 1940 after the collapse of France, and was given the special appointment of Head of Mission to the Free French to assist them where and when he could. Later he became head of the Spears Mission to Syria and the Lebanon and in 1942 British Minister to those two republics.

The many thousands of Vichy French under arms in the Levant were directed by the Germans. The Allied Forces, which included Australians, faced the terrible task of fighting those who had been counted friends and allies a year before. It was a short campaign but exacting and dour and its success left a bitter taste with the British. But how much more bitter between Frenchman and Frenchman.

When an armistice was signed, the French mandate in Syria and the Lebanon was administered by General Catroux, appointed by General de Gaulle under the title of Commandant en Chef des Armées du Levant although he had few troops to command. The Vichy French had returned to France and the small remainder of Frenchmen had gone to fight with the Allies in the western desert.

After his diplomatic appointment as British Minister Louis Spears had the responsibility of working not only with the Governments of Syria and the Lebanon but with General Catroux and with the General in charge of the British Forces, the only military power in the area. A complex and uneasy task.

The British Legation, which had been the Japanese Consulate, lay on the side of a hill looking towards the sea over narrow streets of pale ochre buildings. Its pillared hall glittered with local furniture set with mother-of-pearl. I was to discover that Mary

Spears, Madame la Générale, had the art of making rooms look pure and beautiful, as well as that of organising delicious food.

Mary was many persons in one although all her facets formed part of an integrated whole. As Madame la Générale she was the Director of all the personnel of her mobile hospital, excepting the French surgeons; she was the wife of the British Minister with the diplomatic obligations this entailed; and she was the distinguished American novelist, Mary Borden, a creature of creative impulse, of perception of the unseen as well as of the seen. In her early life she had been married to a missionary, a period which must have strengthened and developed some unassailable sides of her character, those of integrity, faith and endurance.

Madame Catroux, also Madame la Générale, had called on me in Cairo soon after we arrived there. I knew nothing of her except that she was the wife of the distinguished General Catroux. She was a handsome elegant woman with the degree of vitality that is difficult to resist, one way or the other. It fascinates and hypnotises or it terrifies. She began by telling me how pleased she was to meet me because I was not English. I had to point out that I was British. It was a family affair. She seemed, I thought, a little like Mme Chiang-Kai-Shek with the same fitful charm.

When I met her later in the company of Mary Spears I appreciated Mary's great strength. These two were worthy adversaries; they could scarcely be thought of as allies. One belonged to the new world, the other to the enclosed old world. Mary's heart was completely in the Allied cause and she served it with understanding. For a Frenchwoman this cause was difficult; it was complicated by pride, division and dislikes; it was impossible to accept whole-heartedly. Mme Catroux was powerful by nature; she was more powerful because of her position as the first French lady of the Levant.

The narrow coastal strip that formed the Lebanon was, I thought, the most lovely country I had seen or dreamed of. One could almost perceive the gods walking. Our drive from Damascus, so welcome, had wound through the valley pass between the mountains of Anti-Lebanon and those of the

Syria and the Lebanon

Lebanon. There was snow on the peaks, and farms sculptured from local stone hung on the mountain sides, disappearing into them.

The aura of the Bible was still around us. The remains of the ancient city of Tyre, now sunk beneath the encroaching sea, was revealed by photographs taken in a particular light. Wherever I went, in visits to hospitals dotted about in lovely places, I saw not only faces but history, past and present.

By the railway running north from Beirut that the Australians had helped to build, the Australian badge of the rising sun was cut into the stone of tunnel openings. There was even a carved dingo amongst the signs left over the centuries by Moses and Napoleon. As well as these traces of their fleeting presence the Australians had left a good name, a feeling of affection for them, of respect. This memory will fade perhaps but it will last as long as the tall eucalypt that lives at the entrance to the Valley of the Dogs, not far from the railway. The seed of this tree must have come from Australia a long time ago, when seeds were brought to grow into the giant trees along the banks of the river Nile.

I think of many aspects of the Levant. The short-stemmed red tulips that grew wild near the airfield at Riadd where I waited with Louis Spears for the long overdue aircraft that brought Dick back over the tremendous mountains from Tehran. The little summer house the Spears had high up at Alieh on a narrow terrace cut out of rock; trees grew between the boulders on the platform where we dined at night breathing the cool air, feeling from our height above the moonlit Mediterranean almost like gods except that we had not the power of the gods to bring peace. Palmyra in Central Syria, when we flew thoughtfully over the ruins of the great avenue of columns where centuries ago the caravan routes had converged. On a nearby hill the remains of a rough crusader castle looked down on the classical Greek pillars and arches abandoned, as it was, to the encroaching desert.

At the edge of the desert one of Mary Spears' mobile clinics, formed after the fighting ended and before her hospital moved to Libya, brought medical help to scattered villages. These clinics were served by doctors from the American University at Beirut,

Syrian nurses and young English Quakers, and were supported by the British Army.

I think of Aleppo near the border of Turkey, where we landed one day, the whitest city I had ever seen. It might have been made of piled-up bones, so delicately pale were its buildings and battlements.

While Beirut was a pleasant coastal city, European in many ways, influenced by the civilisation and sophistication of the French whose language was its second tongue, Damascus was a tremendous Moslem Arab city. It lay in a vast fertile oasis under the protection of the high western mountains of Mount Hermon and the Anti-Lebanon. It was said to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, the market for produce and goods for the Bedouins of the Syrian desert, the end of the caravan routes. When we were there it was also the starting point of the armed motor caravan service, inaugurated by New Zealanders, which ran to Baghdad.

The mosques and palaces of Damascus were often concealed from view. A door in a blank wall would open into a courtyard or garden to startle the onlooker by the rich beauty of the buildings within. The vaulted souks were higher and darker than those of Cairo and lit with colour from the wares in the booths and the garments of the passers-by. Even the shoes, strung in the shops from ceiling to ground, were mosaics of colour and glitter. The desert Arabs walked in the passages of the bazaar with proud and purposeful step; the men wore spurs and flowing cloaks of camel hair for it was cold at the time.

Wherever soil was deeply turned in these countries off the eastern Mediterranean, in such places as Sidon, Tripoli, Latakia, the ruined castle of Sayoum, traces of the past would appear, traces from many centuries and civilisations; mosaics, fragments of statuary, of domestic pottery, of glass, of jewellery.

The earth still holds many secrets.

Off the coast of Syria lay the fish-shaped island of Cyprus whose tail or maybe antenna pointed towards Antioch on the river Orontes. The beauty of the shores of the eastern Mediter-

Syria and the Lebanon

anean was also on this disputed island, that no one could ever wish to leave. It has been possessed and fought over like a beautiful woman for centuries.

On Cyprus we visited Nicosia, Mount Troodos covered with pine timber, and Lefka in the north where the ancient Phoenician and Roman copper mines lay – the lovely metal, cyprium, that had given its name to the island. Abandoned for a long time, these mines had been acquired, cleaned out, and developed by an American, Mr Harvey Mudd of Los Angeles after reading the translation by Mr Herbert Hoover of an old Roman book, *De re metallica* by Georgius Agricola. Mr Mudd made his modern machine shop available through Dick for Allied naval maintenance in the eastern Mediterranean.

The old Roman pit-props had been preserved in copper-bearing mine waters for two thousand years and metallic copper had crystallised into the grain of the wood. We brought a few pieces back with us and when the wood was polished the copper glittered like mica in rock.

The theme of Enosis – union with Greece – now so insistent, could be heard strongly twenty years ago. Dick through an interpreter asked some polite villagers as he passed by who had told them to cry, 'Enosis!' They answered, 'The priest'.

The Desert Road

In February 1943 I went with Mary Spears to visit her hospital in Tobruk and from there on to Benghazi, eight hundred miles west of Cairo.

The ebb and flow of the war in the desert had become stabilised into a final movement by the Allies who were advancing towards Tunisia. Few enemy aircraft were to be seen and only an occasional bomb was dropped in the vicinity of battered Tobruk which had been the port of supply for our troops in Libya.

We left from our blue villa near the Pyramids down the road to Alexandria that so many men had travelled on their way to battle. For a night we stayed with the British Admiral at Navy House in Alexandria. I had seen this wonderful seaport before from the air – an Egyptian city still stirred by the spirit of its Greek past.

In the harbour a French naval squadron of a battleship and a number of cruisers and destroyers, commanded by the pro-Pétain Vice-Admiral Godefroy, lay uncomfortably at anchor – a source of expense and embarrassment to the Allies. This squadron was an example of the agony of divided allegiance that severed Frenchman from Frenchman. While Godefroy adhered rigidly to the theoretically proper chain of command, many of his officers and crews wanted to fight with us but were unable to overcome his authority. In the end Godefroy rallied half-heartedly to the Allies while advising Vichy that he had done so. His ships were later employed in Allied operations and took part in the landings in southern France in 1944.

(Godefroy's squadron brought Mr Harold Macmillan, British Minister Resident in N.W. Africa, to Cairo in March 1943 to discuss its fate with Dick. Taking off from Algiers his aeroplane

caught fire and he was badly burned, helping others to safety. Almost at once he came on to us by air, his head and hands masked with bandages. It was some days before we were able to see the face of this courageous man. It was pink and shiny and his hands were contracted but he paid no heed to this. Many years later I asked him how he could have flown on to Egypt so quickly after his accident. He replied, 'If I had not come on at once I don't think I could ever have got into an aircraft again'.

We talked one evening in Cairo of the future of us all after the war, and the light of his future seemed to be on him then.)

A narrow main road wound its way along the Mediterranean coast west from Alexandria; it was crowded with transports going forward, American now as well as British. We paused at Buq Buq where Merlin Scott had been killed when our tanks were caught by the enemy, bogged in the mud in a hollow between the road and the sea.

I had been given an Australian service hat, wide-brimmed and turned up at the side, by General Morshead (he even produced several for me to try on for fit) and this I wore for protection against the sun and dust and because the chin-strap kept it firm on my head, but the deeper reason was my pride in the Australian stand at Tobruk.

We entered the town round the edge of Tobruk harbour, looking out on to a wide stretch of water where many ships seemed to be riding at anchor. But it was an illusion as flimsy and unreal as a stage setting as we discovered when we were taken by launch on to the water by a naval officer expert enough to avoid the dangerous hulks that lay concealed, or partly concealed, beneath the surface. The ships that appeared to be intact were found, as we came close to them, to be leaning perilously on their sides or sinking from stern or bow. A sickening sight. One hundred and fifty sunk or sinking ships enclosed in that terrible harbour.

The town of Tobruk was itself a wilderness of destruction. A few buildings remained untouched and inhabited but they were scattered and surrounded by rubble. The effect was of an untidy

Tides and Eddies

area thinned out at random, as it might be, an emptying car-park.

The Hadfield-Spears Mobile Hospital was camped on a rise above the harbour. The wards were large tents, while a motley collection of smaller tents, huts and lean-to's housed the surgeons, the Friends Ambulance Unit, the nurses and the girl drivers.

It was spring and the desert, after rain, was in truth flowering like the rose. There were small scented wild-flowers everywhere, deep in the wadis and spread out around us like a lacy carpet. Wherever there was a sign of devastation its edges were blurred by a trail of flowers. Jocelyn Russell, one of Mary's drivers, collected and made drawings of ninety different species of flowering plants.

We ate in a tent lit by lanterns – a mixed bag of persons, English, American, French, Australian, doctors, nurses, girl drivers, members of the Friends Ambulance Unit, young men who would not fight yet followed the hospital as orderlies into battle areas. As we ate, whiffs of night-scented stock floated towards us and we listened to the seductive melody of Lili Marlene on the German radio. Three boys came in after dinner to say good-bye to their friends amongst the girls – young officers in a regiment of Guards going forward next day. One of them was Hugh Trenchard. Of these three only one survived death on a minefield.

The hospital was not full at this moment; it was waiting to move on. I remember several Arabs and a child, lying amongst other patients in a ward, injured by mines. These mines had been laid here and there on each side of the long road. No one knew where they were or how thickly they had been planted and as we travelled west we continually saw remains of their haphazard destruction in the skeletons and carcasses of camels and smaller beasts that lay in our range of vision. These forms were repeated sometimes in the wrecks of aircraft seen on the horizon, curved, craggy, whale-like in bulk.

It was never safe to move off the road. This dreadful stream of danger persisted for the inhabitants of the country, for their children and their animals, for who knows how long?



Darjeeling gardeners. Drawing by M.C.

Government House, Darjeeling
Pat Jarrett





Leborg Race Course. Water colour by M.C.



Lord Wavell and M.C.

The Desert Road

I left Mary Spears at Tobruk and went on to Barce where there was a British hospital unit. My Corporal driver had been by profession a woman's hair-dresser and he was a sensitive imaginative man. I had not thought, myself, of leaving the main road but the Corporal as he studied his map suggested that after Derna we might slide off a few miles to the north to have a look at Cyrene, the city of Apollo, which had been in its day the largest Greek city in Africa with a population of 100,000. It was abandoned by its people in the fourth century B.C. for Apollonia, the seaport below it on the coast.

To the east of the road as we descended was another landmark of the war, the damaged modern buildings lately occupied by the Italian command.

Cyrene was a miracle of fragmented beauty, frozen in time. In crystal air the Corporal and I stood on a terrace of stony land perceiving through the detail of broken rock and marble the wonderful city it must have been. In a courtyard a row of headless muses stood, superbly shaped under their complicated draperies, facing distant Apollonia and the Mediterranean sea.

Below them were rock-cut baths on different levels, some of them surrounded by pillars. Round a deep circular bath, where the priestesses of Artemis were initiated into the rites niches were cut out of rock and under each niche was a sitz-bath.

The pale colour of the ruins, pale from the faded golds and blues of stone and rock and the marble of limbless figures, was stressed by distant bands of dark olive trees and, for the one moment of spring, by the bright wild-flowers that grew in profusion in every cranny and wherever there was open ground.

From Barce we left for Benghazi and the matron of the Barce hospital, where I had stayed the night, came with me. Matrons, I had found, liked to meet someone new. It was a relief for them to talk for a while to a stranger. They were nearly always over-worked lonely individuals, senior to their nurses and orderlies and subordinate to most officers around them. They lived in a particular isolation.

The desert we had been through for so many miles, a desert of dust and glare and danger with the strip of road running through

it, led after Barce into more bland and inviting country. Hills appeared, olive trees, and gradually a hint of real growth, no longer only the exquisite ephemeral net of wild-flowers but a wide-ranging wash of green vegetation covering the ground.

Long strings of convoys filled the narrow route, some moving back as well as forward. We came to a point where a transport was held up and we could not pass. An injured boy was lying on the road and no one seemed to know what to do. He had been hanging out from the side of a forward lorry and a truck going the other way had torn his left arm off at the shoulder. The arm was lying on the side of the road.

The matron found a door leaning against a deserted house, had the boy laid upon it and staunched the wound as best she could with bandages we had in the car. She called on me to find something quickly on which to raise his head and shoulders. I could find nothing – nothing better than his severed arm. We placed his head comfortably in the crook of the elbow and I saw that the young hand, pale now as marble, was still open as if to wave. The matron sat by him until the ambulance she had signalled for arrived from Benghazi and took him away. We found by the papers on him that this day was his nineteenth birthday. He died as he reached Benghazi hospital; all I could do was to write to his mother to tell her that we had been with him and that the matron had cared for him.

There were two more accidents that day on the road to Benghazi, both serious, but none stayed in my mind as this one has. It comes back to me as an echo of the fragmented timeless forms of Cyrene.

Benghazi was a considerable town. It was a mixture of graceful Italian architecture and small box-like dwellings overhung by palms in the native quarter by the sea. In the harbour a number of ships could be seen but I no longer thought of them as riding at anchor but as dark and empty hulks like those of Tobruk. In spite of the gaps and the rubble between the buildings in the main street, and the pock-marked walls, the wounds of Benghazi were small compared to those we had seen elsewhere, inflicted by war or by time. No town we saw, however, put together in our

The Desert Road

contemporary world, could have outlived through the strength of its material or structure the enduring ruins of Cyrene.

The British hospital I visited held many cases of road accidents and mine injuries but only a few battle casualties, as the advancing Army took its field hospital units with it. Through the pioneering of the Spears mobile hospital the Director of Medical Services in Cairo was now recommending that nurses should be permitted to go into the forward areas.

The matron at Benghazi spoke with distress of the recent visit in January of Lady Tedder. I had arranged to go with her on this expedition but as I had not yet heard of the safe arrival of Dick at Accra on his way back from Washington to Egypt (he had in fact a forced landing at Puerto Rico) I had waited behind in Cairo for news of him.

The party, which included an Air Vice Marshal and several officers as well as Rosaline Tedder, took off from Benghazi in a wide-spread dust storm. I was at Heliopolis close to the Cairo airfield that afternoon and could not see beyond my hand through the swirl of the biting gritty sand. While I was there, though I did not know it at the time, the aircraft crashed into a low line of hills on its approach to the landing strip, killing all on board. Wind into death.

Memory is a strange thing. It operates at different levels and in response to different calls. From the upper sources of memory we select what we consider to be relevant, and then, from some unconscious store, a past experience, forgotten and unsought, forces its way up to disturb and re-direct our thinking.

In Purdah

The countries of the Middle East were, like Egypt, not directly involved in the war. They waited to see how it would develop. They were exposed to a good deal of German propaganda and in the early stages there were few achievements that encouraged them to be pro-British.

At its outbreak Iraq had broken off relations with Germany to become an uneasy non-belligerent on the side of the Allies. After a series of political intrigues and events it eventually declared war on Germany in January 1943.

Soon we were to visit Baghdad, a name that promised magic. We flew to it over the river Euphrates and the stretch of country between the two great rivers that used to be named Mesopotamia. I imagined it a rich green valley but it was pale and arid, eaten out by goats.

Baghdad, as we entered the city was dominated by a long grey featureless street. The British Embassy was built on the west bank of the Tigris, the wide river on which, as well as craft, all kinds of objects floated on the current. You could see swollen carcasses of camels and other creatures in the distance and estimate how long it would take them to reach the edge of the Embassy lawn where a man waited with a pole to prod them out into the flow of the stream. From the distant bank tiny circular boats carrying passengers and light cargo spun across the river, guided with great dexterity.

There seemed little colour in Baghdad. The mosques had been painted a protective brown; small houses were built of mud or soiling yellow brick; in the narrow tortuous lanes of the city the upper stories of wood, crowded by closed and barred windows, hung out so far into the streets that they almost met in the middle,

throwing an added darkness over the passing dark figures of women wrapped like cocoons from head to foot in black. One sign of colour, and it gave the excitement of a brilliant butterfly seen round an ash-pit, was the little hand of Fatima, with touches of turquoise at the wrist, fastened to an occasional door. Sometimes we saw, though very rarely in this world of the dark-eyed, a flash of blue-green eyes circled by kohl looking out through the slit in a woman's head drappings. I was told that these women were probably Circassians.

A New Zealand pilot attached to the R.A.F. was flying a communications Fairchild aircraft similar to our Able Dog Fox and he invited me to take it up one morning to look at Baghdad from the air. It was the first time I had flown an aeroplane since Washington and was to be the last until the end of the war.

Baghdad was indeed a subdued city, given life by the great swelling river that divided it. We flew over the ruins of the ancient city of Ctesiphon on the east bank of the Tigris and saw in the early morning light the marvellous arch that rises like a prayer from the flat earth. Wherever we went in the Middle East Greek names were scattered, reminding us of the spread of the old Greek empire. Each fragment of masonry or sculpture showed traces of its classical excellence as every Greek word refreshed us by its pure and aristocratic sound. Cyrene, Apollonia, Euphrates, Palmyra, Philadelphia, Ctesiphon, Persepolis.

We cannot think of Baghdad without sorrow. Perhaps the foretaste of it lay in this grey visit. We remember the descendants of the Prophet who had survived so many tragedies in their long and turbulent history to be assassinated, blotted out, in 1958 in what may have been a moment of hysteria. The young King Feisal, his uncle who had been Prince Regent, and others from that ancient family.

Prince Abd'ul-Illah, the slender and youthful Prince Regent, was brother to the Queen Mother who had lost her husband King Ghazi in an accident in 1939. Whenever we met the Regent he wore impeccable western clothes but in my mind I saw him in Arab robes and his dark-eyed oval face under a flowing head-dress.

The Queen Mother lived with the little King Feisal II in a modern villa furnished in anonymous western manner, white walls, chintz curtains, heavy furniture. With them lived also some female relatives and the King's devoted English nurse Miss Borland who during the uncertain days of 1941 had cooked and tasted all his food.

In these visits to Arab countries I had one advantage over Dick. I was able to meet the women who were often in purdah.

The Queen was a shy gentle creature who spoke little English. Our conversation was limited in spite of the efforts of Feisal to put us at ease. He was eight years old at this time, a noble little boy with a grave long face, who received us with beautiful correct manners; then he threw himself into the arms of Lady Cornwallis, wife of the British Ambassador, with a child's warmth and laughter. I sent him a toy kangaroo and have kept his neatly written letter of thanks. It ended: 'I take Kanga to bed with me, so that she won't feel lonely so far from Australia'. A small flower for his memory.

The Prince Regent's other sisters whom I met when we dined with him, though only upstairs in a feminine session afterwards, were younger than the Queen Mother. They were pretty and gay and spoke French and perfect English although their impressive mother seemed to have no word of it. Because the members of this family were descended from the Prophet acceptable marriages for the young women were difficult to find. These sisters, I believe, afterwards married Iraqi Army Officers.

Nuri-es Sa'id, many times Prime Minister of Iraq, who was also assassinated in 1958, was one of the few Arabs whom Dick came close to and for whom he felt friendship and understanding. He was a brave man who had weathered many storms and had the long-range vision of a statesman, perhaps too long-range for violent and hysterical times.

In 1957 Nuri told Dick that his government was using its oil royalties of about £80 million a year for large-scale long-distance development that would broaden the base of the Iraqi economy and so gradually improve the standard of living. Perhaps more

showy immediate benefits might have had greater political appeal to the people.

When we visited the Amir Abdullah of Transjordan in his modern palace at Amman, the ancient Philadelphia, I was again taken upstairs into the women's quarters.

Here I found an unhappy transplanted woman amongst the three I met in purdah: the mature silent first wife of the Amir, and the wives of his two sons. One was an Arab, the other a blonde Turk, lovely as a flower, who had come to her marriage from a free life in a sophisticated setting in Cairo. She spoke in French and told me how miserable she was in her enclosed life in the women's quarters and in a high-walled garden. She felt like a bird that had been caught and put into a cage.

She talked nostalgically of the pleasures of her school days, of the tennis she had played, of her gay and stimulating friends. Though her life had its happy moments, there was so much time now in which to do nothing. Her only contact with the excitements of the outside world was in reading detective stories. Would I please send her some new *romans policiers*?

The Amir Abdullah was a small slight man with a strong face above a neat black beard. He was dressed in exquisite Arab robes piped with gold, with a ceremonial dagger at his belt. He moved lightly but with dignity. His mournful intelligent face lit into a smile as he greeted us at the foot of his wide staircase. 'You come like birds to perch for one moment and then you fly away!' And his hands made the fluttering gesture of birds in flight.

I took away from Amman two ancient Roman tear bottles of opalescent glass still faintly encrusted with salt, made for ceremonial tears. Their bases were shaped like onions with fine stems rising from them.

There was no purdah in the royal setting in Tehran. Like his father the Shah of Iran believed in the emancipation of women.

Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi had succeeded to the throne by the abdication of his father in 1941. He was a forward thinking young man, handsome, strongly masculine with a large authori-

tative nose and thick-lashed attentive eyes. He appeared powerful and intelligent enough to deal with his difficult country and the times he lived in.

He was then married to his first wife, the sister of King Farouk of Egypt, who was like a pretty film star in her very short flowered silk dress. She bore him no son and I was told that she was not liked by the Shah's sister.

The Shah resided in a contemporary palace of green marble ornamented with designs drawn from ancient Persepolis. I had hoped we would be received in the room with the fabled Peacock Throne but the old palace which held it was now only a show place entered through a formal rose-garden. The throne stood alone in splendour at the back of an empty hall that glittered with mosaic of mirrors and coloured tiles on the walls. It was made of precious metal set with rubies and many emeralds, polished uneven stones of all sizes; from the high back of the chair rose a heraldic sun, bright with diamonds.

Mosaic made of tiny mirrors, an inch square, was a feature of interiors in Tehran, in palaces, in embassies. It lined the entrance halls and state rooms and covered the pillars and arches. One saw oneself broken up into a thousand pieces; the overall impression was of a shadowy kaleidoscopic figure where no detail could be seen. This mosaic of mirrors gave great brilliance to a room, the brilliance of shimmering heat.

The entrance to Tehran by air was one of the most terrifying we had known. It was a drop. The city was spread on gravel fans at the edge of foothills, at a height of nearly four thousand feet, and was protected on three sides by a high wall of mountains rising to twelve thousand feet. From enemy country in the north it was almost inaccessible. It looked south over a high plateau towards Qum where the sainted body of Fatima lay enshrined on a mosque between four azure minarets tipped with gold. I remember that the New Zealand pilot I had flown with in Baghdad was killed in this craggy terrain.

Much of the city of Tehran was modern with some charming aspects and survivals. In a sloping main street currents of water coursed down stone gutters on either side, water that was used for

many purposes and was deflected here and there, pinched off, for the watering of gardens where irises and roses bloomed. Once again the roses were small to our eyes though like those of Egypt they were scented and very sweet. 'Rose, Queen of all flowers whose petals even in death, like Saints, smell sweet.'

Behold India!

(1944 - 46)

Our time in the Middle East had come to an end.

We took off in the sea-plane *Cleopatra* from the Nile early one cold morning in January 1944 for India – Dick, Jane, Donn and I, and Misr who was wearing Alexander Kirk's scarf round his neck. He turned out to be an easy traveller, adaptable, with tolerance and good temper.

The Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Charles Portal, had provided Dick with a Lockheed 10a aircraft for his use in the Middle East and Bengal and it tagged along behind us with our meagre luggage.

We fuelled at Sharja on the Trucial Oman coast at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. As we lost height to land at Karachi Donn wrote in his diary: 'Two stars coming out in the sky. Behold, India!'

What did we know of India, particularly of Bengal? Very little except that it was the second threatened delta in which we had found ourselves, that it had just been through a terrible famine, that on its north-eastern boundary lay Burma held by the Japanese, that it was the base for our campaign against the enemy by air and land, and for the American bombing and supply aircraft to China.

Behold India! As we flew eastwards across the continent we saw no jungle, no herds of elephants, no palaces, little but a near-desert which was akin to all the deserts we had seen before. Not until we reached the boundaries of Bihar towards the north-east of India did the rich green of the Bengal paddy fields and tanks establish themselves as part of the pattern of the great delta of the Ganges, where small mud and basha huts fitted tightly together under the palms and beautiful trees of India.

Behold India! (1944-1946)

Calcutta, a crowded city in a confined space between the Hooghly river and the swamps of the Saltwater Lake, appeared in a haze of industrial smoke as we drove through it to our new home, a huge building which in war-time veiled its distinguished form beneath a purple coat of cow-dung and soot.

This famous house was completed in 1803 for the Marquis of Wellesley, brother of the Iron Duke of Wellington. Much of the early history of the English rule in India was made in its Council Chamber. The Governors-General and Viceroys lived there until the seat of government moved to New Delhi, in 1912. The shape of the Calcutta house was roughly that of a squat human figure with arms and legs outstretched. Its plan, with curving corridors radiating from a central pile of State rooms to detached wings, each wing a house in itself, was well adapted to a climate where every breath of air was precious. The offices were on the ground floor, the State rooms, the Council Chamber, a princely suite and the Governor's study on the first floor, and on the second floor the four wings held rooms for the Governor and his guests.

The house, on an island site, was surrounded by a large garden of perhaps thirty acres. Its driveways, with arched gateways giving entrance to four thoroughfares, were covered with small pale slippery stones described as Lord Wellesley's Sparkling Pebbles; on them lay great vultures, spreadeagled in the sun, heavy and repulsive until they rose into graceful flight. No doubt the pebbles were brought to Calcutta in Lord Wellesley's day as ballast for the ships from Britain that returned to their northern ports laden with rich goods from the East. I thought of the reverse case of the blue-black stone from Williamstown and Melbourne in Australia that loaded the vessels sailing to England at a time when Victoria had little export trade.

As well as the vultures, monkeys that like the cows of India were semi-precious abounded in the garden. They were surly gangling beasts whose coats looked as though they had been badly dyed. Snakes slid in and out of our swimming pool.

People looked on with interest and amusement at my efforts to reduce their number. I was assured there had always been snakes and monkeys in the Government House gardens. But the Superin-

tendent of the Zoo, who came on my invitation to advise me, was imaginative and anxious to help. He sent a snake charmer, with his boy, to play a reedy pipe. Many snakes appeared from nowhere writhing towards him, to raise themselves and sway to the rhythm of his music. I watched them, fascinated, before they were collected, soothed and docile, into bags and taken away.

The Superintendent then sent a decoy monkey in a cage which was placed in the centre of the garden. She was a charming little creature with fluttering eyelashes; both male and female monkeys rushed to inspect her, were trapped and transported to a distant park.

The design of Calcutta's Government House was based on Kedleston Hall, the home in England of Lord Curzon's family, and it was a great satisfaction to Lord Curzon to occupy it from 1899 until 1904 as Viceroy of India.

He loved the Calcutta house and for me his feeling for it lived in intangible as well as in tangible form. He put in the narrow lift that ran from the private entrance hall up to the governor's rooms. It looked like a birdcage made from delicate iron bars and scrolls, picked out here and there with fanciful gilding. Over its pointed roof it wore, like a birdcage, a covering of bottle-green felt. Each time I took myself up in the lift I had a mental picture of the impressive Lord Curzon ascending beside me.

He also added high pedestals for the great marble busts of Roman emperors, copied from those at Kedleston, which were ranged along the aisles of the pillared dining-hall and looked down with disdain upon the changing procession of fleshly persons who came there to eat.

When we arrived at Government House there was a shadow over it. Two successive governors had died there, the latest only a few months before, and the pall of war and famine lay upon Calcutta.

The earlier of the two governors had been Lord Brabourne who died in 1939; the memory of his death was one of my sorrows on reaching this house.

Rupert had known him in the 1914-18 war; after it ended they happened to meet in Paris and went shopping together for hats.

Micky Brabourne bought one for the girl he was to marry and Rupert bought one for me. For neither of us was the venture as desperate as it sounds, and any hat would have suited the lovely Doreen. The four of us found ourselves together in Cologne in 1920 and became friends.

Micky had a special grace inherited from his Viennese mother which was to bring him into close sympathy and understanding with many Indians and to earn him a widespread degree of respect and affection. Traces of the Brabournes distinguished personal taste could be found here and there in the later confused furnishings of Government House.

A few days after Dick was sworn in he fell ill with amoebic dysentery and I could feel the intensified gloom and the unspoken thought, 'This is an unhappy house . . . this is the third governor . . .'

We had arranged what was described as a small dinner party (forty persons) to meet the Chief Justice and members of the Bengal Ministry. We could not cancel it comfortably under the circumstances so I held the dinner party alone amongst strange Indian and English faces. I was conscious as I was escorted into the Throne Room to meet our guests that they had known many governor's wives and that I knew nothing of them or of Bengal. I realised also that I did not know how to pronounce Hindu and Muslim names and titles, and neither always did our aides-de-camp who did the introducing. It was not sufficient to know one name, usually one had to know two and often three in order to make a proper distinction between individuals. Dr Shama Prasad Mookerjee, Dr Amiya Chakravarty, Begum Ara Shah Nawaz, Sir Muhammad Azizul Haque.

The house at this time had indeed an unhappy and neglected air. Its exterior was blurred by the purple coat; inside many of its possessions, its paintings, had been stored away for safety; the ball-room was stacked with furniture from the Viceroy's Calcutta house, Belvedere; rats and cats roamed around in sequence and cockroaches were to be seen as large as yabbies. Misr took care of some of these.

One of our early house guests was Cecil Beaton who was on his

way to Burma. He was a comfort and help in these days when I knew nobody and Dick was ill. Together we simplified and re-organised the furniture, borrowing from the Viceroy some elegant tables and chairs out of the ball-room to replace the terrible things that had been in the dining-hall on our arrival. Cecil taught our gentle and poetic Hindu doer of flowers to vary our decorations by the use of the clear green of lettuce leaves which enlivened the tedium of endless cannas.

While he stayed with us he also fell ill, with dengue fever, and lay restless or supine for many days. When he felt better Donn who was writing an adventure story entitled (oddly it seemed to us) *Mission to Mombasa*, lay on Cecil's bed and told him how he would like it illustrated. The results were magnificent. Cecil's always brilliant pen was released by his ecstatic and no doubt irritable condition into Donn's uninhibited world. The fourteen illustrations swirl with movement and colour. Out of delirium came invention of a high order.

Dick's appointment as Governor was immediately unpopular in Bengal. 'Have we become a colony of Australia?' the newspapers cried. 'What of your migration policy!' Dick pointed out that this was a matter of maintaining uniformity of population. It had been shown all over the world that it was difficult for persons of different races and customs and demands, of different cultures, to live comfortably together. This was understood, as India was divided, and remains divided, by many races and religions and sects and castes, from Hindus and Muslims to the aboriginal inhabitants, the Santals.

Gradually the knowledge that Dick was an Australian began to fade. At least Australia had no imperial history, no past of hurts and resentments to be brooded over. It was a distant isolated continent with no natural enemies.

There grew up a certain sympathy for us. Many Indians believed that Australians had struggled for their independence from Britain in the way that they were now struggling for theirs. They had a fellow feeling for us based on misconception.

Behold India! (1944-1946)

Dick became aware that in Bengal he was dealing with a highly intelligent and subtle people, and he gave them his most serious consideration. He was himself direct and accessible.

His task was to try to help Bengal in its many and appalling difficulties: shortage of food after famine, over-population (65 million persons in an area the size of Victoria), disease, lack of money, lack of development, a fierce Hindu-Muslim antipathy.

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Before I move on to the matters of Calcutta, of the country districts of Bengal known as the Mofussil, I must write of the life of the noble house that was our home for two years. It was the springboard for our experience and a world in itself, with activities of every kind and on every level.

These began downstairs on the ground floor with offices and files – mountains and generations of files – labelled and tied with pink tape, cared for by gentle studious Bengalis who pored over them, kept them endlessly up-to-date, and staggered in with selected covers on request.

We had found on our arrival that there was no inter-house telephone. If you wanted to speak to someone on the next floor you reached him through the outside Calcutta exchange, but there was a chit system in which notes were delivered by the hands of smartly dressed shoeless bearers and the message lay before you, clear and positive.

Before the war the Governor had his own string band which played on State occasions and in the distance during formal dinners. Now the musicians had other tasks. The only State music we heard was offered to us by General Stratemeyer of the U.S. Air Force on the occasion of our V.E. dinner. It was a large brass service band and most enthusiastic. The chandeliers in the great yellow drawing-room were wakened out of their dignified glitter of movement to tremble and shake and jangle to sounds and syncopations they had never heard before. A gentler music was played once while we were still at war with Italy. The Duke d'Aosta's private string quintette, in detention in Calcutta, came in the dusk of an evening and thirty of us, sitting haphazard, listened to Bach and Mozart and to de Bussy's *Fille aux cheveux*

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de lin'. It was a setting for which chamber music had been created.

The Governor's erstwhile band-leader had a wife, Mrs Priestley, who was assigned to me as housekeeper, a business she had not undertaken before. She became a comfort and a pleasure – a quiet common-sense Scotswoman with a nice turn of phrase. 'That's a good-natured skirt you are wearing', she might say to me.

When Dick was appointed Governor of Bengal the British Treasury gave him an allowance to outfit him with tropical clothes. This grant also extended to his wife but, alas, I was not aware of this until we had been in Calcutta for more than a year. Any clothes I needed were made for me by an elderly Muslim *dhirzee* who conducted his cutting and sewing operations from the floor. He was a superb couturier who could design a dress, or follow my designs as faultlessly as he copied model garments.

Mrs Priestley understood and felt affection for the servants of the house, of different races and castes, coming from all parts of India, from the south to the Himalayas. There were many of them because each one only did his own task, from the scaling of fish and the plucking of the little skinny chickens we ate to the efforts of the sweepers, the only persons excepting occasionally myself who would stoop to pick up something that had fallen on the floor.

The meals for our dining-hall, and for the busy passing guests who often ate in their own rooms, were cooked in a separate building and brought across to the house through the agency of Bibutti, our major-domo, a fat experienced little Bengali whom nothing, no nightmare event or unexpected arrival, seemed able to disturb. Our cooks were Mughls who came from the borders of Burma. They were described as the French cooks of Asia; indeed they made our small meals taste delicious and even avoided monotony in the constant serving of the fish Becti.

This kitchen building, that I visited unannounced, was a revelation to me. It was crowded not only by our domestics, hundreds of them, but by their countless relatives tucked away in corners.

The social system of Bengal, one of the oldest in the world, was based on close-knit family ties whereby the head of the family, or

he who was in the best circumstances, accepted responsibility for elderly or indigent relations – grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and children – and looked after them where and how he could. This joint-family system developed a high degree of nepotism in the community on every level of occupation and profession. As in Egypt, life was so hard and employment so unreliable that it was touching to find how strong was, not human kindness in the broad – how could that be – but the sense of kinship.

As well as this great pressure of human beings of all ages at Government House, in and around the kitchens, the sculleries, the laundries, was the presence of other creatures. Mrs Priestley struggled with the giant cockroaches, rats were poisoned and cats were captured through benevolent Englishwomen who had formed a society for the care of domestic animals.

Another level in the house was that of secretaries and aides-de-camp. We had four of these as well as two smart Indian officers, Bengal Lancers, who met arrivals by train and air. They were indeed needed to look after the constant stream of guests who came to Calcutta on duty.

We had inherited an English aide, wounded at Dunkirk. He was David Clowes, M.C., a nervous sensitive plump young man who took a great deal of trouble over his tasks; more than anyone he was attentive to our guests and tried to make shy persons enjoy their meals with us. Our other aides were successive Australians, and American pilots being given a break from flying operations. We finished up with a girl seconded on sick leave from top secret employment with General Stratemeyer. She was Major Sandy MacAllister in the U.S.W.A.C.

Some weeks after our arrival in Calcutta Pat Jarrett came from Australia to be once more my secretary. She brought two hats for me from Rupert, whose memory was stirred by the thought of Micky Brabourne. They were lovely small hats that I wore constantly.

In the meetings I had to conduct in the Council Chamber I was glad of Pat's support. In spite of the open windows through which floated the monotonous cries of the brain-fever birds and the

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electric fans overhead that stirred the heavy air, the Council Chamber had retained its atmosphere of deliberation and concealed conflict. It was an impressive chamber.

The bodies that met there included men and women, persons of all races and religions, Hindu, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, drawn together for special purposes and discussions.

I cannot have been a good chairman, but I was the wife of the Governor and had the extra advantage of being an unknown quantity.

The Bengal Women's War Committee formed by Lady Mary Herbert early in 1940, met in this chamber. In March 1944 it became a branch of the W.V.S. India, the unifying council for women's work during the war.

The Dowager Marchioness of Reading, founder of Women's Voluntary Services (for Civil Defence) in England which soon brought its valuable work into other countries, came to Calcutta to stay with us that year. I had known and admired her for a long time. I knew that her husband, the late Marquess of Reading, had been Viceroy of India and that this country had a special meaning for her. I cannot describe her better than by quoting from Donn's diary written during this visit: 'I imagined Lady Reading would be a small woman who wore pince-nez, but no. She was a tall beautiful woman with lots of Oomph!'

I must mention that Donn is descended on the Casey side from a long unbroken line of diarists.

A gallant and gifted man, novelist, playwright, composer, director, entertainer, who had been asked by Lord Louis Mountbatten to go into Burma to cheer up his forces during the monsoon, was Noël Coward who stayed with us coming and going.

Dick had known Noël since late 1939 when he had met him with Maurice Chevalier at Arras in France. Since then we had seen him in Washington and in the Middle East where he was one of the first to entertain the troops in this area. Before him, wandering round in a truck amongst the Allied units for two years, had come one solitary Frenchwoman, Alice Delysia, to give of her unflagging best. A beacon amongst the French at this time.

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Nöel, generous loyal friend to so many, afraid of nothing and nobody, loving to trail his coat, was a breath of fresh bright air wherever he passed. Off the stage as well as on it we found him a delight. In a world with more than sufficient sadness and apprehension what a pleasure it is to laugh.

On his way back from Burma Nöel thought up a new song and tried it out on our piano. It was named, 'I wonder what happened to him?' While he sat there singing and smiling gently we noticed that some of those who listened with us seemed a little self-conscious.

Seated all three together I told him that once when I had sent Dick a cable for his birthday I received the reply, 'Gradually growing up. Love. Dick.' 'But, dear boy' said Nöel, 'So very gradually!'

The Throne Room off the dining-hall was a great long chamber that looked over the garden towards the Maidan where hundreds, thousands, of people congregated in the stands and on the grass when cricket and football were played – crowds whose dots of black hair and white vests and dhoties appeared from the distance like a thousand full-stops scattered on to white paper.

In the middle of the Throne Room between deep windows a draped canopy hung over a narrow sofa, set on a dais. The sofa, whose arms were silver lions, had belonged to Warren Hastings who became in 1774 the first Governor-General of Bengal, the greatest of them all.

From this dais Governors and sometimes their wives held investitures, presenting medals and awards to a stream of variegated recipients. Otherwise this room was used in our day longways, for big meetings.

Edith Evans, who came to India to play in 'The late Christopher Bean' for E.N.S.A., comforted me when I asked how I could possibly make myself heard in a space as immense as the Throne Room. She said, 'Don't shout. Speak to a person right at the back and your voice will project itself naturally'.

One quiet evening while she stayed with us Edith appeared for dinner wearing a blue and silver sari. It is an almost impossible

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garment for a western woman to wear but she wore it with the fluid grace of an Indian to whom this lovely dress is almost a part of herself, like flowing hair.

Of the history that had been shaped in the house some fragments emerged even in our short occupation.

The Supreme Allied Commander Lord Louis Mountbatten, whose headquarters were in Ceylon, came from time to time to Calcutta with his staff. He stayed in the suite on the first floor that had taken its name from the Prince of Wales' visit to India in 1921. Lord Louis, who had been with him as Naval A.D.C., told me that he had walked up and down the curved corridor leading to this wing, making up his mind to propose marriage to Edwina Ashley. She had a good deal of money and he had not, which made him pause. Then, he told me, he decided it was as false to pay attention to too much money as it was to too little. It gave it an ill-judged importance.

When Lady Louis arrived to stay a little later on she examined the house with interest. 'Here', she said taking me into the same corridor, 'is where Dickie decided to propose to me!'

We had met her with wonder in Washington in 1941 when she was on a quick lecture tour through the States for St. John Ambulance Brigade – wonder, for her beauty, for the legend that had grown up around her, around them both because of their intelligence and vitality, but most of all wonder for her extraordinary powers of concentration. It was a concentration on whatever task she had in hand but also on human beings to whom she gave a piercing and compassionate attention. She was to stay with us several times; each time revealed a new facet of her personality.

When she visited military hospitals in Calcutta I went with her but kept behind, as I had done with General Montgomery in Egypt, to observe her progress. Edwina, to the horror of British Colonels, shook hands with everyone assembled for her departure including the delighted sweepers in the background who were not used to this attention.

A quality that distinguished her was the rare one of humility. It

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was a clear light she carried before her to help her to look and to learn.

Government House, so full of memories of occasions and events, of intimate personal happenings, of secrets never to be known, had flowered and sometimes suffered in constantly changing hands.

Looking into the mirrors that had hung for so long on the walls, one saw behind one's own face, clouded by the fading brilliance of the glass, the fainter faces of other generations. The house had seen not only successive masters but the progression of history, of changing thought, and as we glanced into the mirrors, passing by, we saw no shining and undisturbed paths ahead, no reflections of calm green lawns. Another era was coming of which we were personally much aware.

We thought first of the independence of India that had to come, of the period then of transition when its administration and the business of government would be helped and carried on by the superb body of I.C.S. officers, Indian and British and those of other services, trained and responsible, whom we met in Calcutta and in the districts of Bengal. We thought beyond, to the rising of future generations and the fading of any memory of British rule.

Our moments in this house were coloured by the ghosts, the echoes, the evidence of the past, by the current events of war and the problems of the province, and by a sense of its future, so that our association with it was precious in the way that human associations are precious because of our mortality. Houses too can be mortal.

Some Indians came unwillingly to Government House. I could understand this for two reasons: one, that the atmosphere of such places tended to be formal rather than relaxed, not necessarily enjoyable; the second reason was the resentment and bitterness that events had built up between a subject and a ruling race. Government Houses were the symbol of this rule.

While Dick and I were convinced that the independence of India must come soon, few Indians believed this.

The unwavering direction of the educated people of Bengal,

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55% Muslim, 45% Hindu, was towards freedom from the British. It was one of the few subjects on which they agreed although their mutual antipathy to each other varied in intensity, and there were sometimes friendships and marriages between individuals. When we arrived in Calcutta there was a Muslim League Government in office while the Hindus who were better educated held most posts in the provincial public service.

The women who visited me at Government House, Hindu or Muslim, seldom spoke of communal matters. Occasionally a wry smile would drift across their faces if I made some unacceptable comment, but they were always beautifully mannered. When we got to know each other better they would speak of the freedom for their country they so passionately desired. They told me of the parts they had individually played in this struggle for independence which had brought many of them into prison for civil disobedience.

I felt myself privileged to be visited privately by Mrs Sarojini Naidu, the Bengali poet and mother of the present Governor of West Bengal who much resembles her. She was a vital fascinating woman with a silver tongue and a lively and original sense of humour which played round some very distinguished figures. Though she realised that the day of independence for India must await the end of the war, she was sceptical about it happening at all.

So was Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of Mr Nehru, who became after independence one of the most experienced public women in the world. A beautiful woman, she had some of the special grace of her brother. He had a kind of physical and spiritual radiance that seemed outside nature. One thought of the flight of the phoenix.

The character of Muslim women was embodied for me in Begum Ara Shah Nawaz from Lahore in the Punjab, though she did not look like those from the east who generally shared the special physical features of the Bengali.

She was one of our first house guests. I can still see her as she came towards me under the icy stare of the Roman emperors in the dining-hall. I had known her before and her face not only held

its own vigorous beauty but the comfort of familiarity. Like her young daughter Mumtaz Shah Nawaz (Tazi) she was both fiery and gentle; she proved to be a faithful friend.

Ara led, had always led, an active political life, the dedicated and turbulent life of a patriot, desiring not only independence from the British but a separate state for Muslims. Tazi, poet and writer, her mother's true daughter, died in an aircraft accident near Shannon in Eire when her hopes were beginning to be realised.

Tazi had written—

“If it is peace you seek
Then go your way
With me you will only find
Fire,
The urge of the stream,
The surge of the sea,
Human hunger;
These you may find
But not peace.
With me you will only find
Storm,
With its deeper shadow
And intenser light.”

The year 1945 brought high events.

The United States President Franklin Roosevelt died in April. He was mourned by persons in every country; even in the huge, largely illiterate city of Calcutta a feeling of sadness was abroad. He had become known to the world as the friend of human beings, of the small men. When he died they lost an embracing sense of security, of confidence in his understanding.

In July the Conservative Party was defeated in the general election in England. Winston Churchill, who had led a coalition government for five years through the stress of war, was succeeded as Prime Minister by the Labour Leader Clement Attlee. The next step was set for the independence of India.

Representatives of the Regional Red Cross met for informal talks in our Council Chamber on 1st and 2nd August 1945.

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Germany had been defeated by May but there seemed no reason to believe that the war with Japan was near its end. Through some prescience, or perhaps because it seemed wise to move ahead of events, I suggested that we should begin to collect clothing, our best clothing from men and women, for the prisoners of war who would come through Calcutta if there were an armistice.

On 6th August the atomic bomb was exploded over Hiroshima. The world became irrevocably altered.

Early in this book I wrote of the horror, to me, of the declaration of the first world war. The attack on Hiroshima produced a human reaction deeper than horror. It was a nightmare from which there could be no waking.

Possibly an atomic attack had to come, sometime, from somewhere, but the bomb on Hiroshima opened the door to the development of even more frightful instruments of destruction.

Human beings have always lived with fear, it is one of the first emotions we recognise, but this new fear was outside nature, something we could neither comprehend nor resist.

On August 15th Japan surrendered with one condition only, that the position of the Emperor should remain unaffected.

From the prison camps of the Burma-Thailand railway, from Rangoon, from the Gobi desert, from Singapore, Borneo and Hong Kong, prisoners of war began to return through Calcutta. Amongst the first of these were Australians from the Burma-Thailand railway Rohan Rivett and Norman Carter; Bill Hudson and John Kerr from Rangoon. So much accustomed to hardship were they that during the nights they would move down to sleep on the floor under their comfortable Government House beds.

The senior men who had been interned on the edge of the Gobi desert included the ex-Governors of Singapore and Hong Kong Sir Shenton Thomas and Sir Mark Young, the ex-Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies, Van Stakenbourg Stackower, Lieutenant-General Terpoorten, General Wainwright from the Philippines.

Those from the north arrived with little knowledge of the

events of the last years, of how the war had developed, how their own parts in it were estimated, how they would be received. They were undernourished, uneasy, apprehensive, with an underlying sense of guilt that was not easy to dissipate. Some of them felt themselves divided from other human beings whose experience in the long interval had been so different from their own. It was a gulf hard to bridge between husbands and wives, between members of a family.

Shenton Thomas's first act was to go out and buy a sapphire ring for his wife who had been interned in Changi Gaol. There were rumours that she had died and we held our breath. But a few days later she was flown from Singapore and arrived at our house, as imperturbable in character as her cousin General Montgomery, to pick up the threads of life as if there had been no break.

When the Japanese control of Thailand ceased the young King Ananda Mahidol, accompanied by his brother and the forceful Princess Mother, stayed with us in Calcutta on his way to Bangkok to take up the throne as Thailand's first constitutional monarch. During the war the two brothers had been at school in Switzerland.

They sat one on each side of me at mealtimes – tall handsome shy boys who spoke in French.

The King knew that he was about to enter a life very different from the one he had led in Europe but he was determined to know his people and to serve them more democratically than had been possible under an absolute monarchy. He was bringing with him the contemporary thinking and enthusiasm of a young man.

I watched the two sensitive faces with particular interest, wondering how these boys would adapt themselves to their recovered country, a country that had seldom been dominated by a foreign power but had a long history of political heaving and weaving.

A few months after his return to Bangkok King Ananda died mysteriously from a bullet wound. He was succeeded by his brother P'umi P'on Aduldje.

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Into our house and our lives, for the length of her own life, came a messenger, a forerunner of the great man, Gandhi. She was Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, a Christian from Simla who had been Mr Gandhi's secretary and had worked closely with him in his ashram. When India became independent Prime Minister Nehru gave her the heavy portfolio of Minister of Health.

Graceful and slender like most Hindu women, she was unexpectedly steely of body and had been one of India's outstanding tennis players.

She looked very much like Mrs. Amery whose distinguished husband Leo Amery was British Secretary of State for India and Burma in Mr Churchill's Cabinet during the war. Their two faces, of bony elegance, had the same intense spiritual quality; their dark and luminous eyes were lit by a flame behind them.

Amrit Kaur talked to me of Mahatma Gandhi and I formed a picture of him different in many ways from all we had heard of him. I learned of his tolerance of religions other than his own, of his feeling in particular for Christianity.

After the war ended, he came to Calcutta to see Dick. They met seven times in long interviews. Indian people do not permit themselves to be hurried in the way that we do.

Out of Dick's office, which he described as being about the size of a tennis-court, a concealed spiral staircase of iron lace led upstairs to my sitting-room. I came down it to meet Mr Gandhi after his first visit, when his business with Dick was over.

It was winter then so he was wrapped up in a fine white Kashmere shawl. His lean golden-brown legs showed beneath it and on his feet he wore a pair of sandals of unusual pattern. He afterwards had a similar pair made for me; they were of cowhide, but from a cow that had died a natural death for cows are semi-sacred in India and are protected.

I could not keep away once I had met Gandhi and hurried down the little staircase to greet him before he left, on every occasion except on his day of silence when any exchange of thought was conducted by him on slips of paper.

I found his strong gentle personality irresistible. His gestures and speech were clear and dramatic though he was able if he

wished to wrap himself in a cocoon of words impossible to penetrate. He spoke of interesting matters and asked interesting questions. He had no particular sympathy with the scientific age, still less with the industrial age. Life was better and happier, he believed, if it was simple; he could not see why the western pattern of living should be imposed upon the east. I was reminded that, of the nearly three thousand million human beings in the world, not more than a third of them were aware of the industrial age and of western civilisation. This age and civilisation touched only a crust of persons and gave them toys rather than happiness.

I was not the Governor. I was only his wife therefore my conversations with Gandhi flowed in unrestricted freedom. His eyes behind thick lenses were shrewd and kind and comforting. I had the feeling that if I were in trouble I would like to go to him for advice, which though it might not be for me entirely functional would be wise and human.

Mahatma Gandhi had an extraordinary power over Indian people. Persons of his own Hindu religion revered and obeyed him even if it meant exposing themselves to death, but respect for him was universal. When he came and went through the portals of Government House all our staff, clerks, domestics, gardeners, of whatever religion or caste – all living creatures – crowded the entrance hall on his arrival and departure, greeting him reverently after their own fashion. This happened to no one else who visited us. I went with Dick to see him out on his last visit and noticed that even the independent Misr, who differentiated between persons, had appeared from somewhere to watch him go.

A great man came and went and the aura of peace and patience that surrounded him remained with us for a while after he had gone.

Mr. Gandhi's friend who became his adversary was Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Although his immediate ancestors were Muslims they came, like many Muslim families in India, of old Hindu stock. Mr Jinnah was himself a close friend of Mrs Sarojini Naidu, a Hindu, and he married as his second wife the beautiful Parsee girl, Ruttendai Petit from Bombay.

When he visited us in Calcutta he was the idol of the vast majority of Indian Muslims, the torch, the flame of cold light, that was to lead them to the partition of India.

As President of the Indian Muslim League Mr Jinnah had at one time believed that there might be some peaceful form of co-existence between Muslim League and the Congress Party. Both he and Mr Gandhi had been united in their efforts to save Indian unity, but this was not to be. An insoluble position had been reached through early policies, missed opportunities and mistakes on all sides. Mr Jinnah was tall, pale, thin almost to emaciation although his frail body suggested the strength of a coiled spring. He had piercing dark eyes and spoke with the cool precision of a lawyer. I thought him a little frightening until he gave one of his rare smiles.

I asked him how he saw the future. He said he was now a fanatic. He was implacably determined that after independence Pakistan should become a sovereign state.

In 1947 India and Pakistan became separate countries. Pakistan was severed in two by the breadth of the continent. Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan which lay above the mouths of the Ganges, was divided from Karachi in West Pakistan by a distance of nearly fifteen hundred miles. Between lay India. The Bengal we had known was split in two.

Just before his death when Mr Jinnah had become the Quaid-i-Azam (Mighty Leader) and was living in Karachi as Pakistan's first Governor-General, Dick and I, on our way back from London to Australia, were invited to dine alone with him and Miss Jinnah, his sister, who was as like to him in appearance and demeanour as a woman can be to a man.

Mr Jinnah reminded me of our conversation in Calcutta and said, 'You see, Mrs Casey, if I had not been a fanatic, there would have been no Pakistan'.

Gandhi and Jinnah – whose lives ran parallel, whose desires had met and separated, whose personalities and determination hastened one of the great events of history, the beginning of the ceding of colonial power, the great break through into the present era – were two very different persons.

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Gandhi was visionary, patient, subtle, elusive, exceedingly charming: Jinnah, exact, austere, single-minded, forceful.

Both these great men died in the same year, 1948. Gandhi, the advocate of non-violence, was assassinated in January by a maniac. Jinnah, a few years younger, faded away from illness in September nearly a year after his creation, Pakistan, had been launched into uneasy nationhood.

Calcutta

The crowded city of Calcutta surged round the sanctuary of Government House like turbulent waters round a rock.

As I have written, our garden was a haven for monkeys, snakes, and birds, from the sluggish vulture with its faint whining cry to the little crested hoopoe. The grounds were recognised by all these creatures as a sage and comfortable place in which to live or rest. They were protected by a wall of trees that screened them from the sounds and vibrations of the city.

We were not used to so many exotic trees with their tree-top elegance of scented flowers, often flowers without leaves. Round the edges of the lawns grew such vegetation as the Rain-tree whose pink blossoms closed up at the threat of rain, and the Candle-tree with flowers that drooped from the trunk instead of from branches and whose fruit hung down like bunches of candles. Here too were the Looking-glass tree that dazzled when we stood beneath it looking up at the silvery underside of its big leaves, the many rooted Banyan tree, and palms of great height with the rows of corrugations that counted their age.

Outside our garden the life of the city was hard, crushed down by the burdens of poverty and overcrowding and disease under an oppressive heat that lay like a moist blanket over us all.

Calcutta seen briefly from the air was land broken up by water, streaks of light that were the arteries and veins of the rivers, gleams from the lakes and swamps and tanks, or waterholes.

Government House and the Victoria Memorial were the great landmarks set in coils of green which merged into the wide open spaces of the Maidan. The ordered streets of central and south Calcutta led into slum areas whose small dwellings, named

bustees, built of dried reeds and bamboo and light wood, crowded together in narrowing lanes heaped with refuse.

Short was the life span of the people of Bengal; short also had been the lives of many foreigners who lived there in the days of the East India Company and afterwards.

Flying over the heart of New York I had thought of it as an immense grave-yard of high monuments. Soon I was to see a microcosm of New York in the old English cemetery in Calcutta, an area of great monoliths of stone divided by straight narrow paths – needles pointing to the sky.

Many brief lives were recorded on the plinths. Some very brief indeed of babies and small children but few of the lives had been longer than forty years. Familiar names were amongst those of persons who had died, no doubt from cholera, typhoid, smallpox, malaria, tuberculosis, unknown fevers.

A tall pillar, its starkness softened by a wash of green mildew from the long humid years in Bengal, stood above the body of a young English girl, Rose Aylmer, the love of Walter Savage Landor, rebellious man but tender poet. She died in Calcutta at the beginning of the eighteen hundreds, perhaps because she wilted in a strange country far from her love.

The plinth is illuminated by words from his poem:

“Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and sighs
I consecrate to thee.”

The normal hardships of life in Bengal had been augmented by the Allied retreat from Burma in 1942. The exhausted men struggling back were followed by a stream of refugees who overwhelmed the crowded province, choked the trains, lay on the railway platforms, filled the hospitals.

Later came the failure of the monsoon and the main aman rice crop of 1943. It was no longer possible to procure rice from Burma which was in Japanese hands. Hundreds and thousands of people had died as the result of the famine when we arrived in Bengal in 1944.

As well as the established hospitals of Calcutta new ones had been hastily erected in the city and the villages to take care of the immense number of undernourished, sick and dying. They were known as Famine Relief Hospitals and were not only of essential use but had a spiritual virtue in that the many persons who were terrified at the idea of hospitals, and avoided them, came through dire need to accept them, then and afterwards, with gratitude and a lessening of fear.

The military hospitals were similar to those I had seen in the Middle East. The Indian hospitals were something else. They dealt largely with the diseases of the country, and much effective research was done on these tropical diseases. The wards were handicapped by a shortage of women nurses. The nursing profession was still looked upon with disfavour by the parents of young girls. Not yet had a Florence Nightingale arisen in India to open the way for educated girls, to establish for all nurses a proper feeling of respect and appreciation.

One of the most depressing places I visited was doomed by its name. It was described as the Refuge – A Home for the Homeless, the Helpless, and the Hopeless. Every form of destitution and misery was here and the institution was but a microcosm of the misery abroad.

Tiny mad women were locked away in the bare rooms of the Refuge; the gentler ones roamed in the courtyards with burning eyes, wild white hair, and arms so shrivelled that they seemed to be clothed in golden-brown crepe.

One little boy of seven with one eye gone and the other hanging out of his face was Kartik Das. We were able to adopt him, and the surgeon at the Eye Infirmary of the Medical College Hospitals, Captain John Somerset (who looked exactly like his Somerset cousins in Victoria) removed his other eye. Kartik was then taken by Mr Amal Shah of the Calcutta Blind School to be educated. He turned out to be a most intelligent and charming boy, with a future.

Each day I drove through the city streets to a different destination, to visit schools, nurseries and kindergartens, institutions and hospitals. As I passed by I watched the black-haired people in their

white clothes, seated or moving on the side-walks or roads, many of them beggars or creatures of a terrifying frailness. But it was under the full moon that they seemed most vulnerable, human beings massed together in sleep. They lay stretched out or curled up on the pavements in hundreds, their garments gleaming whiter than the moon's own face.

Because some governors in the past had been shot at in the streets it was decreed that the Governor should be driven fast for safety, accompanied by outriders on motor-cycles.

My Indian chauffeur wanted also to drive me fast but it was too agonising with all those bare or sandalled feet about in the crowded thoroughfares so I would make him crawl along in spite of the misery to my escort in front who could scarcely keep his motor-cycle upright.

At first no one in the crowds took much interest in my movements, but gradually they did. They would stop and come close to greet me as we passed slowly by. It was an evidence of their good manners. They had observed that I was being careful of them and they wanted to show that they had noticed it.

There were other sides of Calcutta; the more sprightly and variegated life of the market, where crowds came, to sell if they could, to buy if they could, to have the unending pleasure of looking. The Hogg market was even more fascinating than the Muski of Cairo or the high souks of Damascus. Its wares were Muslim or Hindu, from Birmingham or from the jungle – chessmen made from cowhorn and ebony to birds and monkeys and panthers and baby tigers. Even snakes were for sale.

I went there once to buy a mongoose for Donn. I cannot think why I did since our garden was full of them, no wilder than the one we bought for some large sum. But when we took him away the poor little creature was found to be wearing a collar that bit into his flesh. Once this was removed he became quiet and well-behaved though with a strong personality. He had a passion for human feet; he would sleep inside a bed in the foot area or half-way into a man's shoe. His name was Oscar and it was he

who first stirred our minds towards the need for Jane and Donn to go back to Australia to school. We observed Oscar's food being brought in on a silver salver for Donn to administer and thought the time had indeed come for our children to go home to the care of Rupert.

Their return was arranged in January 1945 through the courtesy of General Stratemeyer who put us on one of the first Skymasters to fly to Australia, with special pilots for super-fortresses.

There were fourteen passengers on board, including Jane, Donn, Pat Jarrett and me – no more as it was a non-stop flight of seventeen hours from Colombo to Guilford near Perth in Western Australia. We slid past the Cocos Islands with all lights screened as they were under the Japanese umbrella. I returned to India with Pat a few weeks later on a York aircraft. We took off by night from Exmouth Gulf high up on the West Australian coast and noticed on waking in the morning that the sun was rising in the wrong direction. we had turned back to Australia with engine trouble before we reached the point of no return.

While many Bengalis came to see me in Government House in interviews which were as interesting as those of Washington, I came to know men and women more readily outside on their own territory, against their own background and efforts. Some of them became friends who taught me a great deal. I found the Bengali women gentle and affectionate. They were in some ways like the Irish with the same kind of warmth and mysticism. But they had an extra subtlety drawn perhaps from the intricate and shifting waterways of the delta under whose heavy brooding atmosphere they lived.

Under 15 % of the people of India were then literate and the emancipation of women was not yet far advanced. The pioneers who in the past sixty years had broken through the veil of retirement had done something very remarkable. It was a strong veil to tear, made strong by tradition, by expediency, by the opinion of purdah women as well as of men. I met some frail old ladies, Hindu and Muslim, whose names are now household words, and realised what they had achieved as pioneers in

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education and emancipation, ahead of their time and ahead of countries other than India.

Since then women from India and Pakistan have been appointed by their governments to high and responsible offices in the world. They have been almost unique in achieving this.

The Mofussil

It used to be the habit for governors of Indian Provinces to go on tour into country districts by train or launch for two weeks at a stretch. In the days of the East India Company one Governor-General set off with his retinue on a fabulous journey that lasted two years.

But for us there was no time for leisured tours. The face of life had changed. We were able, thanks to the aircraft made available to us by Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, to visit many districts by air, landing our Lockheed 10a aircraft on airfields the war had brought to Bengal. Most of them were in the east, on points of entry into Burma for air combat operations and airlifts by Dakota transport planes to the 14th Army. Dick gradually had a number of small landing strips made near district headquarters so that less time was wasted in travel by district officers. Sometimes we had to journey, most comfortably, by train but we felt uneasy at the amount of police protection that surface travel decreed for a governor. We were less trouble in the air.

The countryside of Bengal is of infinite variety, from the Himalayas in the north to the tiger-ridden swamps in the south where the many mouths of the Ganges feel their way into the Bay of Bengal.

Close to the enemy-held jungles of Burma lay Comilla and the coastal towns of Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar where mobile hospitals received the wounded as they came through by road and air and later, as the campaign progressed, by sea from Akyab in Burma. In the west of Bengal were the dry and oven-hot districts of Burdwan and Midnapore.

Tours to towns in the mofussil meant a visit to the local school,

hospital, industrial centre, a series of interviews with leading citizens who brought their views and grievances to the Governor for his sympathetic hearing. (The same kind of visit the world over.) We were presented with gifts of local produce or handicrafts by the most important man of the district, and with a ceremonial fish, frequently a giant carp which we passed on to the nearest hospital.

In the centre of the towns wide green spaces, under tall trees heavy with flower and scent, lay between the square public buildings painted in colours from ice-blue to ruby red. On their walls great damp stains hung down like veils. A mixture of persons of all castes and religions lived side by side, eating their separate foods, each division of human beings doing their own particular kind of work. They seemed to live reasonably happily together. When there was trouble it had often been whipped up by agitators. Violence begets violence.

An instance of violence resolved by Gandhi was that of some bad men who were terrorising other Indians in Midnapore and extorting money from them in the name of the Congress Party. The police in Bengal were unable to discover the malefactors and the terror went on. Mr Gandhi sent messages through his own channels in the district asking those concerned to give themselves up even if it meant hanging. A number of the terrorists gave themselves up to the police. When Dick thanked Mr Gandhi for his intervention he replied that a man was responsible not only for what he did but for what he did not do. Had he not done this he would himself have been committing a great wrong.

Towns were bound together by dusty bands of tree-lined roads banked up above the level of the paddy fields, and by constant waterways.

On these waterways, wide or narrow, bunches of the beautiful and terrible water hyacinth would drift past on the current. Eddies were concealed by swathes of lilac blossoms dragging up every drop of moisture. At first we exclaimed with pleasure at the rich green leaves and lovely flowers but soon we shuddered at the sight of this avid plant, intent on survival and increase. It was one of the

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great scourges of Bengal and of every country it crept into through its innocent-appearing beauty.

Sarojini Naidu had written of the water hyacinth in 1927:

Magical, mist purple, pale,
In alluring splendour spread
Snaring pool and riverhead
In your perilous and frail
Farflung, subtly painted veil. . . .

Soft, relentless, delicate
Vampire legion ravaging
Wave and every waveborn thing,
Like a winged insidious fate
Exquisite, insatiate.

Along the roads, travelled by bullock-carts and persons on foot, lay the villages, sometimes Muslim, sometimes Hindu, sometimes mixed. They were shaded by palms and trees, and tanks of emerald green were sunk near to the little thatched dwellings which had earthen verandahs on one side. Pats of cow-dung were slapped on to the open walls to dry off for use as fuel for cooking. Bengalis were personally scrupulously clean but the source of their cleanliness was often polluted. Household and drinking water was drawn from the tanks from which animals also drank and refreshed themselves. Carp and other fish lived in the tanks and I have seen them rise to the surface to listen to the reedy pipe of a boy, to be soothed as the snakes were and made docile for capture.

I learned a few phrases of Bengali for use in villages so that I would not just stand about with a meaningless smile. My friends in Calcutta, particularly dear Shudha Mazumdar, had thought up for me some acceptable phrases so that I was able to produce an unexpected remark or inquiry and appeared to know more than I did. When a group in a village was assembled to be photographed looking shy and glum the single word 'Hasho' would make them put their heads a little on one side and laugh. ('Hasho' means 'smile'.) Mrs Mazumdar, the distinguished translator into English

of the *Ramayana*, did much to interpret for me the Indian mind and we talked together freely and happily.

Travelling through the mofussil showed us something of the simple life so acceptable to Gandhi. Most of the villagers of Bengal were not concerned with government but with their own day to day existence, with the effects on them of undernourishment and the heavy pressure of the weather. It mattered little to them what the minority of human beings desired or decided.

The growing of rice was their chief concern. They pressed the individual paddy plant into the earth with their hands and Hindus carried out religious ceremonies for the bestowal of the right amount of rain at the right time. If the monsoon failed there was famine.

On these tours we slept in special bungalows close to the earth where the noises of the dark flowed in to us and we became part of the life around. There were sounds of the withdrawal of human beings, night cries, and presently the distant howls of wakeful jackals. In the early morning, still in the night it seemed, the notes of birds stirred us back into life. Though I am not a musician it came to me during the passage of hours we spent in *Dak* bungalows, some of them in lonely places, that here was an Indian symphony waiting to be written – a symphony broken up in the Asian way into more notes than we of the west can isolate or employ, and with a theme and a rhythm based on the Bengal night with its mysterious animals and birds and gods and goddesses moving and uttering within it. Maybe such a piece of music has been written.

Both Hindus and Muslims were enveloped in their own faiths though they respected the holy days of others. To each of them their own religion was a part of the structure of their lives as constant and intimately known as the rising and setting of the sun. While the faith of Islam is widespread in the world and is in many ways akin to Christianity, the Hindu faith is more complicated and difficult for us to understand. The gods of the Hindus have many manifestations and forms. They are guides and comforters, bestowers of blessings, of fertility, whose strength is renewed and increased by *pujas* (festivals) throughout the cycle of the year.

The Mofussil

Most religions have some universal base. When a little loaded raft was drifted on water as a prayer for a departed Hindu it was said. 'If you offer for one you offer for all'. This was the great tenet of Ramakrishna, a holy man born by the river Ganges who died towards the end of the eighteen hundreds. He and his interpreter and disciple Vivekananda, though Hindus, believed primarily in a universal religion: 'If you wish to find God serve man'. Schools for orphans were developed by the monks who succeeded them and were distributed throughout Bengal.

For years I had heard of the work of Christian missionaries in India but the picture in my mind had been thin and bloodless. A more robust picture came out of our meetings with them in the mofussil where there were many of all denominations, Protestant, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, some from Australia. They were qualified and practical persons whose primary purpose was to serve rather than to proselytize, except through example. They taught and cared for orphans, looked after the sick and old in medical missions, instructed pupils in engineering and other professions, and fed and nursed the starving during the famine.

The Catholic schools and convents in Calcutta had educated many of the girls who later emerged as leaders amongst Indian women. Not all of them became converted to Christianity though they learned much from the discipline and moral strength of the nuns, much also of the cast of thought of the western world.

Tigers lived in the grass and forest country below the foothills of the Himalayas. Some of these were shot every year because the decrease in number of deer and pig, their natural food, forced them to prey on domestic stock and to become cattle killers. Old tigers sometimes turned their attention to human beings whom they found easy to kill. We were told that they did not at first like the taste of human flesh but on becoming used to it liked it very much.

There are two ways of trying to shoot tigers. One is from a rough platform up a tree, the other from the back of an elephant, standing up in a little cage (*Howdah*) behind the *Mahout* (keeper)

who directs his charge with his bare feet, a series of grunts, and prods by a small iron spike.

A few months after the end of the war we were taken on a tiger hunt near Jalpaiguri by Mr E. O. Shebbeare who had been head of the Bengal Forestry Service and subsequently Chief Game Warden in Malaya where he was interned by the Japanese.

He told us how to conduct ourselves from an elephant's back in the presence of a tiger and stressed the need for us to remain in our howdah even if the tiger jumped at the elephant. The elephant, he said, would deal with the tiger.

It was by their kills which attracted vultures that tigers were known to be in an area. They seized their prey by the throat, killing it with their powerful fangs, dragged it some way into the jungle and returned later to eat it. Like us they liked their meat tender.

The guns, on elephants, were lined up along a clearing and a dozen beating elephants drove towards them through the region where the tiger was expected to be.

I stood up on my mount, Soondar Mooni, which means Beautiful Disposition, but I did not at once realise what a privilege it was to be on her back. She was a creature known and revered for a long time by Shebbeare who afterwards wrote a book about her. He had just seen her again after his years away in Malaya.

She was elderly, a little stiff in the hocks, and exceedingly well-mannered. I picked a loofah pod from a passing tree with the idea of using the loofah inside it for my bath, and dropped it. Soondar Mooni fished about for it in the long grass and handed it up to me with her trunk. I knew very little about elephants and was much impressed by this as I was by her performance during the day. Not all elephants are staunch. They are nervous creatures capable of bolting with their passengers through a tree forest.

When we drew up in the line, about twenty yards apart from each other, Soondar Mooni moved her weight from foot to foot, flapped her ears and pulled down twigs to clear my vision or to suck them. When the tiger appeared she stood like stone.

The first sounds that came to us were of the felling of small trees by the beating elephants as they forced their way through the

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jungle, and of the scattering of birds. Then we heard the shrill trumpeting of elephants and a whisper on the air of 'Bagh, Bagh', and for a while silence.

The next noise was a full-throated roar and it seemed that the jungle trembled. When the undergrowth stirred seventy yards ahead of me I thought at first it was a bird, but through the dappled light I saw the head and shoulder of a tiger moving cautiously along, his body concealed. I had a good look at his round fierce face as he stood still for a moment. Then he moved on and I saw him clear and beautiful, chestnut red with narrow stripes of sooty black. A shot cracked out and he fell like a log, hit through the heart. This was the first and only time that Dick shot a tiger.

I rode on Soondar Mooni again in an exercise known as *ghooming* which meant wandering through the forest on an elephant seeing what we could. One or two of us sat on a pad like a mattress strapped to her back, with no guns. (It was said that domestic elephants moving by night might be equipped with tail lights, small lanterns tied high up on their tails to glimmer in the dark.)

Our path was sometimes through high sweeping grass where deer or wild pig might be spotted scuttling by, or through a thicket of tall trees with birds rustling and crying out at our approach. Jungle fowl, ancestors of our domestic breeds, hurried along the ground led by cocks whose tails were curved like sickles. I can remember a white peacock rising laboriously from a tree, dragging its long tail upwards past the leaves – a nightmare to a pilot whose dreams sometimes take the form of negotiating an aircraft in and out of open windows or under narrow bridges.

In Bengal we were constantly aware of the presence of the delta and of the wall of the Himalayas up above from which the waters flowed.

In the Nile delta we had lived under clear skies where few clouds formed and no rain fell. In Bengal the air was always saturated with moisture and when the monsoon came, lasting intermittently for months, rain poured down in sheets upon land and waterway.

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Before the monsoon released itself was the dreadful time. Everybody became nervous and apprehensive – perhaps the rains would be light and insufficient. As well as this widespread anxiety of mind there was a physical uneasiness. The air was more than ever oppressive; the tensed body waited for something to happen.

When the rains came there was release. All creatures felt better and their hearts unfolded, ours too. Between the heavy down-pours and the darkening of the entire sky would come patches of clear sunlight. For a short time the air was stirred and strengthened and it smelt fresh.

The variations in the content of monsoons over thousands of years had continuously altered the patterns of the waters of the delta. Cloud bursts had forced new channels to break from tributaries, changing the shape of the land, and these new channels in time had taken the place of parent waterways. River towns and villages were sometimes left high and dry and failing water on which to travel or fish, they were abandoned by their people.

We visited a deserted city, Gaur, in the Malda district of Central Bengal, whose fate had been determined by nature and by man-made events.

It had been a Hindu city, became the seat of the Muslim kings, and was abandoned after its sack and the plague and pollution of water of 1575 when the Mogul capital moved to Dacca.

The ruins of Gaur lay scattered in an area of seven miles by two surrounded by an embankment. It was frequented by animals and birds but seldom by men. Great mosques, tombs, turreted gates, interspersed with patches of weed-ridden water, rose up out of the jungle, themselves a part of it, overgrown with trees and creepers and flowers.

From the Chand Gate a bouquet of vegetation drooped like decoration on a hat from one of its turrets. Tall trees stood upright on the roof of a high tomb faced with fragments of glazed brick, white and blue. Their heavy roots hung down and hugged the structure, sending out narrow cords into the cracks so that the tomb was tied as tightly as possible to its living hosts.

Approaching Gaur from the distance through the forest it seemed that isolated clumps of trees were poised above us at an

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unnatural height. It was not until we stood close to the buildings they grew from that we understood their ascendancy.

In Cyrene only the wild flowers had been there to grow amongst the ruins on the ground. In Gaur the jungle had drawn all of the ruins into its thick embrace.

The escape of the waters from the Himalayas into the sea was through a fringe-like spread of land known as the Sunderbans, two hundred miles wide. It ebbed out into the Bay of Bengal as a mangrove swamp whose greasy earth, spiked by the upturned roots of the trees, disappeared into the water at high tide.

At Khulna on one of the broad channels of the Ganges we embarked on a launch and drifted down stream past villages whose life was spent by the very edge of the water. Markets as well as piers were the touchpoints for the river traffic. As our launch travelled by crowds of villagers and their children came to stare at our craft, less usual than the barges carrying grain and produce, and the fishing boats.

Even on this wide stream occasional tufts of the abominable water hyacinth moved with the current.

Parts of the Sunderbans were sanctuaries for nesting birds. As we came nearer to the sea we boarded small flat boats with identical turned-up ends, and were steered into narrowing channels through a forest of grass and low bushes. On the crest of every bush was a twiggy nest which looked too frail for the gawky young birds with big beaks that stood rather than sat in them. Here and there on the top of some spike of dead tree their large parents were poised like sentinels, making no effort to move away from us as we paddled by. Cranes and egrets and herons were nesting here in a community but few of them moved into the air. Only small maroon-coloured hawks hovered above us.

Low down in the Sunderbans the channels grew narrower still and the banks more sinister with thick mangrove vegetation. We left our boats in parties of two to suck our feet through the difficult ground, to see in our case a long-deserted decayed temple, frequented before the sea had encroached up on the land. We saw also the pug marks of a tiger, made freshly before the

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damp earth had time to lose the imprint. It was said that there were many tigers in the Sunderbans – difficult to hunt in that dark and tide-ridden terrain. From the distance we perceived one swimming a narrow stream. His face was round and attentive, less fierce than the face of the tiger in the north whose life was threatened. It bobbed along above the surface of the current and at the back his tail stood upright, sticking stiffly out of the water like an antenna.

The Himalayas

The wall of the Himalayas extended east and west for more than fifteen hundred miles, towering and impenetrable, protecting India from the north except in the few places where the passes and the ranges beyond were the territory of other countries.

Our first sight of this terrific mountain system was from a school above Naini Tal where we sent our children in March 1944. Sir Maurice Hallett, Governor of what was then the United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh, had helped establish it for the children of members of the British community who were serving in India during the war.

We flew in our Lockheed to the Bareilly airfield, Jane, Donn, Pat Jarrett and I, proceeded on by car and finally by litter from the town of Naini Tal which was tucked into an enclosure of the mountains round a lake whose waters were the colour of bronze. We were borne up a narrow winding track on the edge of steep declines by two mountain boys who held our litters at what seemed to be impossible angles. Whenever we could we got out and walked.

For the first time we saw black-faced monkeys peering at us through the foliage of tree rhododendrons, verdigris green with blood-red flowers. The school when we reached it was on a hillock surrounded by jungle which concealed all kinds of animals and birds whose night cries must have sounded both sinister and exciting to the ears of children.

Naini Tal had not the extraordinary attraction of the tongue of northern Bengal terrain that lay between Nepal on the west and Bhutan, with the tiny country of Sikkim placed on top like a cork in the bottle. This tongue of land held the towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong whose regions were divided by the river Teesta which

joined the Brahmaputra on its passage to the sea east of the Sunderbans. These towns were the trading posts for the mountain people and travellers from Tibet, and holiday stations for the dwellers in the plains.

We seldom visited Darjeeling because there was too much to be done in Calcutta during Dick's years there but it was a delight when we did. We landed on an airstrip below the foothills and drove up by car into the mountains, each thousand feet bringing a different smell, an increased excitement. As we curved up through the forest we sometimes saw on the railtracks that corkscrewed in and out of our sight a toy-like train that chugged and panted and screamed its way slowly uphill.

When we came to Darjeeling, seven thousand feet up, it seemed as though we were on the top of the world, crystallised in air that was sharp and thin, bodiless and pure, scarcely made for the breath of human beings.

In the distance the blue dome of Government House rose from a white building on a hill. Beyond it, high above it, a long streak of clouds with serrated tops lay against the sky. But these were in fact no clouds. They were the icy peaks of the range that culminated in Kichinjunga and Mount Everest, nearly thirty thousand feet in height. They hung in the air, divided from the earth by the blue mists of the mountains beneath them and they appeared as sublime and remote as the stars at night.

The miraculous peaks, seventy miles from us by air, belonged only to the eye. They were not in the territory of India but in that of countries then closed to us. All we could do was to speculate on what lay beyond the mountain passes, the trade routes that led to Bhutan and through Sikkim to Tibet. We watched the caravans moving off with loaded ponies and men on foot.

Darjeeling's first Government House had been damaged by an earthquake in 1934 and replaced in the time of Sir John Anderson by the ferro-concrete building with the brilliant blue dome. Its gardens were imaginative and beautiful. Old trees with orchids, those lovely parasites, blooming from every crack in their bark edged the lawns that looked towards the mountains.

The gardeners too were beautiful; they were hill girls whom

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we saw bending gracefully over the plants, tending them and weeding, wearing on special occasions the family fortunes round their necks and arms, and as ear-rings and nose ornaments. They were the banks of their men, holding and guarding their gold jewellery for currency and barter. These women looked different from those of the plains; their faces were broader, their eyes tilted up at the sides and the golden cheeks of their children had flushes of carmine whipped up by the air, unlike the even pallor of the children's faces down below.

The open market of Darjeeling, laid out on a wide shelf beneath the town, showed us goods of another kind from those of the Hogg market of Calcutta. The sellers and buyers were mainly mountain people wrapped in woollen hand-dyed garments brilliant in colour, buttercup yellow and olive-green, pink and purple. Women were adorned by their gold jewellery. Men from Sikkim and Bhutan could be distinguished by the long turquoise ear-rings they wore hanging from one ear.

Groups of Sherpas sat on the ground playing card games with round hand-painted cards.

The booths offered the strangest goods: sets of teeth and individual teeth that had been lost or discarded – piles of second-hand spectacles, probably better than nothing at all if the searcher tried out enough of them. Stalls were filled with odd-looking root vegetables. Tattooing was a popular art; queues of boys waited to be decorated.

Looking from Government House towards the waves of blue mountains and the icy range, a small hill could be seen in the near distance with a cream circle in the centre that gave the appearance of an egg lying in a green nest. This was the Lebong racecourse, the highest in the world. Round it ran little Bhutia ponies, groomed and trained for the purpose. We rode some of these ponies ourselves occasionally, in the rough, and found them neither fast nor co-operative. They were under twelve hands high, hairy, fat, barrel-shaped and even more cunning than others of their small breed. Often they were accompanied by grooms or *sais* who hung on to their tails on rises, or when they felt tired.

Tides and Eddies

One day I turned up-hill on such a pony from a track running by the edge of a steep drop. I rode him up straight in the classical way, but he fell suddenly back on to me and lay with his weight across my leg and his head stretched out to within a few inches of the precipice. My first thought was that he was injured. Then as I lay there I noticed that his head was moving slightly; his upper lip was reaching out to a piece of succulent bamboo by the path's edge. Hugh Euston, on the staff of the Viceroy, and Pat Jarrett pulled the pony up and I wondered what damage he had done me. But it was a stage turn. I rose unharmed to glare him in the eye which looked back at me with gentle innocence.

The Lebong gymkhana races were held several times a year and they were a microcosm of race meetings all over the world with the same degree of preparation of ponies and riders, the same muttering in corners, the same anxious owners, from Raja Dorji of Bhutan to the local traders from the markets. In later days a pony was registered under the ownership of Marco Polo. It won and the owner was called for to receive the trophy. Surprisingly an Alsatian dog came forward. He was the Marco Polo who belonged to the Governor of West Bengal, Kumari Padmaja Naidu.

Racecourse touts wore one plait of hair hanging under a western style Stetson hat and one dangling ear-ring which they stroked as a form of secret communication. Through the movements of their long flowing robes suspenders could be seen holding up their western socks.

The ponies, starting off like a bunch of beetles, thinned out and tore round the pale circle of earth not fast, I am sure, but as fast as their riders could make them. The good pony who won, or was permitted to win, was rewarded not by a carrot but by a chupatty.

It was at one of these race meetings that an attempt had been made by a Hindu ^{terrorist} fanatic on the life of Sir John Anderson, then Governor of Bengal.

Away from Calcutta I was permitted to drive a car. It was an American jeep small enough to negotiate the narrow winding tracks and powerful enough to mount the acute slopes without puffing. One of the roads led through Ghoom, a Gurkha village

The Himalayas

suitably named as it was continually under heavy cloud or drizzle. Here soldiers were recruited, those marvellous fighting men so much respected by the Commander of the 14th Army, General Slim. Here too their kukri knives were beaten out, largely from old motor-car springs. As we drove around Darjeeling we passed Buddhist priests holding small prayer wheels that they spun as they walked. Streamers of written prayers fluttered from the branches of trees, pouring their messages into the air as offerings to God.

The drive to Kalimpong led through gardens of tea bushes whose green surface of tiny leaves, clipped smooth, appeared as carpets solid enough to walk upon. The road descended to the Teesta river, crossing it by a long bridge that joined the far shore high above the waters. It was said that a coin dropped from the bridge into the brawling current would, if it fell the right way, bring fortune to the thrower. In the Teesta as it drove towards the Brahmaputra river lived mahseer, large fish that the ill-fated President Diem of South Vietnam later told me would rise, on the Mekong river, to the bait of live bats cast by fishermen on to the surface of the water.

Though the mountain people appeared strong and cheerful they were much affected by two diseases, tuberculosis and leprosy. There was a leper colony in one of the most beautiful sites in Kalimpong, on the mountain-side looking down a cleft towards the distant river. This colony was organised and run by lepers themselves. It was a village of areas of cultivation, family dwellings separated from each other, schools, public meeting places, hospitals. Treatment, medicaments, chaulmoogra oil, were contributed by a Presbyterian mission whose headquarters were in Kalimpong.

I visited the colony unannounced, with Pat Jarrett, bringing as many sweetmeats (the kind that is sucked off a stick) as could be found quickly in the shops. They were a great success and the afternoon instead of being the nightmare I expected was cheerful and encouraging. Here were homes and children, and here was hope. There was less helplessness than I had feared.

Expression

Australians, near in race and thought to conservative forebears, did not seem in my youth, at the beginning of this book, to be particularly interested in other realms and people. Travel, because it was so slow and there was less transport available, was not as widespread as it has become and the pattern of the world did not stir the degree of curiosity and anxiety that we now feel about the way other people live and think. We were so far from other countries, divided from them by so many oceans, that the development of our interest had been delayed by our isolation. Now curiosity, and the desire to explore, are roused not only in what is outside us but in our own country and ourselves and in how we compare with ancient races and civilisations. Curiosity is essentially a quality of the young and it tends to dry up amongst older persons though heaven knows why it should. It is part of the breath of life as long as we continue to breathe.

One of the most exciting aspects of the people of Bengal was their indigenous power of expression in the fields of speech, writing, music, dancing, sculpture and the vital folk arts. On the creative side much of it was anonymous and so universal as to be part of the life of individuals like their religion or their food.

Those with whom we talked necessarily spoke in English, to them no more than a second or third tongue. They employed it as an instrument so wide in range as to be startling to us with our limited use of language. In sound, apart from meaning, they were precise and sensitive with an exact ear for vowels and an aristocratic pronunciation. They had a rhythm particularly their own though it could be likened to the rise and fall of the sentences of the Welsh.

Because they enjoyed words Indians enjoyed public speaking.

Expression

For them it was not only a means of communication but an entry into the world of poetry and drama. Both Hindus and Muslims were poetic people with an age-old heritage of literature and a great liking for it. This feeling for words they managed to extend into English, uncovering a wealth of expression forgotten or disused since the days of Shakespeare.

The first time I heard Mrs Pandit speak I was enthralled by her virtuosity. It was at a meeting of the Indian Society of Oriental Art where Dr Stella Kramrisch spoke also, on the significance of the lotus flower as a design. We sat in an enclosure at the end of a room where no air stirred and the heat was suffocating; in spite of the trickles of moisture that ran down all over me I was carried away from the atmosphere by the attraction of Mrs Pandit's speech. It illuminated the subject of matriarchy which had flourished in some south Indian Provinces a long time ago.

This capacity for public speaking extended into lively and witty conversation. The Indian men and women we met in Calcutta were as a rule highly educated and sophisticated companions, less shy than those in the mofussil.

Not only for the Chinese but for us too, the written is different from the spoken language which is fresh off the mind, ephemeral, escaping sometimes ahead of the speaker's control, while the written word is carefully composed in moments of quiet, and re-read. The two languages are designed for different purposes; this is why we groan under the reading of a speech unless it has been conceived as speech and not as an essay.

Poetry which is for the eye/ear, may be spoken but it is another art form, akin to music, to painting: a selection of sound and colour and the bones of thought.

The Bengali language, which not all Bengalis spoke, was melodious; it sounded to me a little like French. I was told that it was rich and flexible, inviting to writers. Poets of the calibre of Sarojini Naidu, 'the nightingale of Bengal' wrote in it but she wrote also in English with complete mastery as did Mumtaz Shah Nawaz.

Except in translation Bengali literature was closed to us. Its conversion from the original tongue must have been as difficult as

turning French into English; the result, though reproducing the sense and sometimes the beauty, cannot have been what its creator wrote.

An art that charmed us was that of letter-writing in which Indians excelled. They wrote with freshness and originality and with an unsentimental tenderness.

“I often re-collect the memories of our meetings and discussions. How shall I express my mind’s sweet feelings towards you? Perhaps those golden days would not come again.”

This is an extract from a letter written me recently by Jamini Roy the distinguished Bengali painter who speaks little English although he understands it. He is an artist of creative ability who has had an important influence on contemporary painting in India.

The son of a small land-owner, Jamini Roy was born in 1887 in a village of West Bengal where the craftsmen, potters and carpenters who made the *puja* images, the dolls and the toys, who ornamented the scrolls and plates, first awakened his interest in form and colour. He studied at the Government School of Art in Calcutta, drew classical nudes and painted in oils in the western manner. But he was to reject what appeared to him to be a literary vision brought from countries outside India as he rejected the repetition of past Indian traditions in art. Jamini Roy felt himself to be nearer to the popular and living Bengali mind and sought to express it in a personal way. He simplified his media and used local colours made from rock dusts, alluvial mud, chalk, and lamp-black, mixed with the glue of tamarind seeds. Vermilion was made from the mercury powder used by Hindu women, blue from the indigo plant. When we left Bengal he gave me as parting gifts a set of the seven colours he himself used contained in little pots ornamented with white, and he gave me also a painting by himself of a sad cow with dewy eyes.

Jamini Roy was most impressive in personality and looks; his head had some of the massive beauty of Picasso’s though his deep eyes were gentler and more withdrawn.

Amongst his early works we have a superb drawing in lamp-

black, and a painting of Christ with his disciples – a strange solemn picture in which the enlarged central figure has long eyes that project beyond the face. When asked why he, an orthodox Hindu, should like Gandhi feel sympathy for Christianity he replied that he wanted to attempt a subject remote from his own life and to show that the human and the divine could be combined only through symbols.

A painter, whose short life came like a flash within the span of Jamini Roy's creative years, was Amrita Sher Gil (1912-1941). Perhaps she was influenced by him, if not directly in her art then by his philosophy which drew its strength from life and not from the past. Amrita Sher Gil, who died at the age of twenty-eight, studied in Paris where she painted some outstanding pictures in the impressionist manner. An Indian with a measure of European blood, she returned to India to shed her acquired skin. She became one of its most rare and creative artists. Her method of painting changed as much as did Jamini Roy's after he abandoned the western influence. She saw her country with new vision and has left a legacy of pictures, simple and grand, glowing in colour like those of Gauguin as a tribute to the Indian countryside and its people.

The village life so near to Jamini Roy's heart was rich in natural expression. The young girls sang and danced, wove textiles and embroidered, drew on the ground the fascinating Alpona.

Their songs did not come from their throats or their heads as ours did but were thrown from the interior of the body. The notes like those in Egypt were difficult for us to catch, so close were they to each other. The songs seemed to us to cease abruptly in mid-air, as it were in the middle of a bar.

Their dances which had a religious base were often accompanied by the chanting of verses, by the music of *sitars* and the rapid beating of small drums named *tablas*. Some dances rhythmic and vigorous were introduced by deep notes blown from a conch shell. In these the whole body was used, unlike the symbolic and complicated Hindu dances where every joint of body, of limbs and fingers, had its own separate movement and significance. The effect was like a ripple running slowly through a snake in which

there was life only in the ripple. This extraordinary degree of control was able to extend itself into movements of the neck and head and eyes which also had their own vocabulary of meaning.

So controlled and graceful were the motions of Indian women that one saw the promise of dancing even in their way of walking and standing, grouped together in a street.

The semi-religious ceremonies of Bengal, Vratas, of which the Alpona formed a part, were instituted to celebrate the changes in the seasons and their influence on human beings. These cults were developed and handed down from generation to generation. The art of Alpona was undertaken by women and has remained a domestic art passed on by mother to daughter. The word Alpona is derived from the Sanskrit Alimpana. The root 'lip' means to plaster with fingers and not to paint with a brush.



Alpona: Ducks and Pond

A handful of rice ground up and mixed with water and vegetable dye was used to make these finger drawings in court-yards, by the entrance to dwellings, on the floor inside, on any suitable flat surface. They were offerings for religious festivals, for the changing seasons and for family occasions like a marriage, a christening, or the welcoming of a guest. Though the designs used in Alpona had their base in the remembered past like notes in music, the drawer might vary them as much as she liked and had

freedom to improvise. With the tip of her little finger and the twist of her hand she might draw creepers, flowers and any pattern that stirred her fancy. Even a child of five would draw Alpona; it was a universal feminine art.

Hand weaving and the making of coarse cloth, Kadi, had been strongly advocated by Mahatma Gandhi as a means of livelihood for the villagers and a way of bringing them close to each other. The woven cloth coarse or fine, was in Bengal usually white with a narrow edge of crimson if it were intended for a sari. In Dacca East Bengal, now the capital city of East Pakistan, weaving was a high and ancient art. The muslin woven there was finer in strand than the web of a spider. It was said that a Dacca muslin sari could be slipped through the circle of a wedding ring. Some white handkerchiefs were made for me there that were lighter than gossamer and inside the narrow border of black the letters of my name appeared as decoration. Dick had some similar marked handkerchiefs woven for him in Murshidabad but his were of strong masculine silk.

It was impossible to touch even the fringe of knowledge of the folk art of Bengal. It was inherent in the people and outside the range of anyone who lived in the machine-made age.

Nearly every article of use in villages was created lovingly by hand, with sufficient variation in design and detail to keep the maker of it happy and interested.

The dolls and toys for children were made of decorated wood or clay, portraying semi-human figurines and sometimes that irresistible bird, the owl. They were objects as charming as the painted terra-cotta ritual plates and the coloured scrolls illustrating myths that were carried by the story-tellers.

Bengal was so rich in art, from the ancient and classical to the immediate and living, that it seemed a good idea to collect some examples of different kinds to show in Government House. This idea worried some of our staff. It was thought that a public exhibition might cause trouble and even danger. I never discovered what degree of screening of individuals took place at our entrance gates but many persons came with pride to see the exhibits and we were aware of no incidents.

Tides and Eddies

This exhibition would not have been possible without the help and advice of experts: the Trustees of the Asutosh Museum, the Calcutta University, the Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, and many other bodies and individuals. It was enjoyed mightily by all of us who were concerned with it. There was such wealth to choose from that many little-seen and forgotten treasures came out into the light for our approval.

Particularly enthusiastic in the search were Mr Deva Prasad Ghosh of the Asutosh Museum, Dr Shahid Surawardy, a great expert, Jamini Roy and John Irwin who was then one of Dick's secretaries.

The central Hall downstairs in Government House made a superb gallery. It was so big that each exhibit or group could be seen in flattering isolation.

Stone carvings from ancient mosques, part of the architectural heritage of India: rose-coloured carved bricks from Hindu temples that showed episodes in religious history – a god dancing with his attendant maidens, and more martial scenes: massive Hindu goddesses hewn out of black basalt whose features had been defaced and yet not made less lovely. Perhaps more lovely through imperfection.

A statue of Krishna as a boy playing the flute, carved out of a single log of Neem wood fifty inches high (16th–17th century) stood above a circular Alpona on the marble floor. This statue had recently been discovered floating down the Ganges.

Small and more intimate objects were arranged in corners against a background of plaited reeds. On the wall hung a quilt whose design radiated from a central lotus flower and depicted the story of one family embroidered by women of successive generations. The convention of these needle-run quilts required the threads used to be drawn from worn saris.

Some of these works of art, particularly the carvings, were afterwards shown in an Exhibition of Indian Art held at Burlington House in London.

Our exhibition, opened in April 1945, was such a success that we held two more. One was of the Indian photographs of Cecil Beaton, a collection that covered most of the continent and was

much appreciated by our Indian visitors. I was pleased to observe that the photographs he took of the Bengal face were the most interesting and moving of all. The heads and faces of Bengali men and women, Hindu or Muslim, were rounder and their noses shorter and less aquiline than those of Indians from the south or the west, and their eyes were soft and contemplative. There was something vulnerable about their appearance, particularly amongst the young.

The third exhibition was of coloured drawings by Rabindranath Tagore, the great writer who had released the Bengali language of poetry from its earlier and tight form and had simplified it while keeping its vigour. Though he had associated with painters of many countries for a long time, filling his mind with visual images as a poet must, he had not brought himself to any expression in paint until he was in the last years of his life. We were told that he began to draw because he was worried by what he considered an effeminate trend in contemporary Bengal art. There was certainly nothing effeminate in the pictures we hung in the hall. Mysterious and symbolic, their brilliant colour was organised and mastered by a vigorous, almost savage, use of black.

The capacity of Indians to express themselves was shown us in another, astonishing, way.

This particular form of mass expression had been stimulated by Mahatma Gandhi during his long political career. It was non-violent protest and resistance – *Ahimsa* – baffling to handle.

We had already heard of the occasions when hundreds, thousands, of white-clad young Bengalis had sat on railway lines to bring to a halt the passage of trains.

We were to see the same technique used during a cricket match in Calcutta in the Eden gardens. The match was between an Australian service team captained by Lindsay Hassett and an eastern zone eleven which included Denis Compton and British and Indian cricketers serving in various branches of the Allied forces.

The large crowd of Bengalis who had come to watch the game suddenly staged a sit-down on the field half an hour before the

Tides and Eddies

luncheon interval. They poured all over the pitch, sat down and covered the grounds like a carpet, rendering play impossible so that the players had to leave.

Meanwhile an Indian official, Peter Gupta, talked to the seated crowd. They rose, melted gently away into their proper places and watched the match continue with no more said or done.

New Delhi

The threads that held India together – the Presidencies, Provinces, Princely States, comprising then a population of more than four hundred million persons – were centred in New Delhi the seat of the government of India since 1912.

The government had a difficult task. The continent was geographically and racially divided; communications and personal contact were made slow by distance. The three Presidencies, Bengal, Madras and Bombay had special problems, Bengal particularly because of the closeness of the Japanese and the aftermath of famine.

To these difficulties was added the distaste of educated Indians for being governed by people of another race. They had become increasingly unco-operative. During the war Indian troops fought, and fought superbly, with the Allies but the majority of Indian people were apathetic about the war.

Field-Marshal Viscount Wavell was Viceroy when we reached Bengal in early 1944. We had met him in Cairo as he passed through to take up his appointment. He and his official secretary, Sir Evan Jenkins, had sat with Dick on our lawn at the villa. Lord Wavell had contributed to the conversation only the occasional comment, 'I see'.

Mr Churchill and Lord Wavell did not get on well together. Both men were too intelligent and magnanimous not to feel respect for each other but the particular circumstances in which Wavell had been placed, including those of control, made any real harmony between them hard to achieve. Perhaps there was also some conflict of temperament. In his Middle East and South East Asia commands General Wavell was starved of almost everything that was needed for military success. Even the greatest of Generals

cannot achieve the impossible. General Montgomery later was fortunate to have the men and equipment he required and by that time we had powerful allies and the tide of war had begun to turn.

The destinies of General Wavell and General Auchinleck were interwoven and both were to end their careers in India. Auchinleck succeeded Wavell as Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, in 1941 and Wavell replaced him as Commander-in-Chief, India. When General Auchinleck's Middle East command was taken over a year later by General Alexander he returned to his old position in India, and Wavell became Viceroy. Those days of change must have been bitter for both men though they were big enough to show no bitterness. When Wavell was relieved of his command in the Middle East after three years of intensive and difficult warfare his only comment was that the Prime Minister was right. The job needed a new eye and a new hand.

Two months after our arrival in Calcutta we flew to New Delhi for a conference.

It was a magnificent city attached to the ancient Delhi which touched both the heights and the depths. The great architectural monuments of the Moguls towered over the old city. They were buildings marvellous in volume and nobility and in their delicate interior detail. The Peacock Throne had once stood in the private audience hall of the Red Fort of Shah Jehan; the elegance of this marble chamber was extolled by the inscription round its walls, 'If there be paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this!'

In the streets of the old city existed the same degree of misery we had seen in Cairo and Calcutta; beggars and the maimed and mutilated amongst the passers-by who unlike the Bengalis in their white garments wore clothes of many styles and colours. Races from all over India were to be seen here.

When I walked in an Old Delhi street with Hugh Euston once again I saw a man, a young man, lying by the kerb apparently near to death and ignored by everyone. We went into a nearby shop and spoke about him. 'Oh', they said, 'He has been there for

some time. When he is dead he will be removed.' We were not persuaded that he had to die and after some effort Hugh had him taken to hospital where I believe he recovered.

The deep rose-coloured stone of ancient fort and mosque was repeated in the New Delhi Viceroy's House and the great administrative blocks that led up to it whose planning had been shared by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker.

Viceroy's House, now Rastravati Bhavan, was a unique creative work. It fitted into the landscape as few buildings designed by Europeans have. The magnificence of its colour, the grandeur and subtlety of its planning have made it one of the last great architectural achievements we are likely to see.

Apart from the tremendous Durbar Hall, the state rooms had an English flavour, given a personal emphasis by the imagination of Lutyens.

Inside the building stretched miles of stone corridors with high vaulted ceilings that have been decorated since the independence of India with occasional traceries in gold.

Though it was better suited to its landscape than Government House in Calcutta, Viceroy's House did not seem to me as functionally acceptable. Some of the detail in the rooms for guests, unusual, varied, always beautifully constructed, was uncomfortably placed, unhandy. The handles of the wardrobes were too high as were the wardrobes themselves. They were designed for giants. There were many steps, up and down, here and there; even the floors of bathrooms were on different levels. It was the complicated house of a fairy tale, full of surprises. But wherever you looked there were vistas into gardens – hanging gardens, low gardens, secret gardens with lilac flowering trees against pink walls, watched over by seated figures on balconies above. Beyond the gardens, woods stretched into the distance to join the rosy dust-filled sky.

The atmosphere here was very different from that of Bengal. It was dry and brittle and often filled with swirling red dust. The flowing garments of walking women fluttered in the breeze. At certain times of day the streets were alive with bicycles, the air noisy with the sound of their bells, warning other riders of

impending collision, falling on to the deaf ears of imperturbable bullocks dragging their loaded carts.

At dinner on our first night in New Delhi I sat on the right of the Viceroy which was lucky for me since he was normally a silent man and particularly so if one was on the side of his deaf ear and blind eye, the results of a wound at Ypres in 1915.

Out of a clear sky he spoke to me of C. B. Thomson. I remembered the quartrain C.B. had written and Lord Wavell told me he had included it in his Anthology 'Other Men's Flowers' which had just been published. He gave me a copy of it containing his own bookplate, a drawing by Sir William Orpen in 1916 of a private in his regiment, the Black Watch. There were some who thought it curious that a general of high command could assemble a book of poetry in wartime, but these poems had lain in Lord Wavell's prodigious memory for many years and the collection came into print as an act of faith and a reminder that the world would not always be at war.

One poem of his own comes at the end of the anthology, outside the gate, as Lord Wavell noted. It was inspired by a madonna designed though not actually painted by Leonardo da Vinci:

.....

Long years of battle, bitterness and waste,
Dry years of sun and dust and eastern skies,
Hard years of ceaseless struggle, endless haste
Fighting 'gainst greed for power and hate and lies.

Your red-gold hair, your slowly smiling face
For pride in your dear son, your King of Kings,
Fruits of the kindly earth, and truth and grace,
Colour and light, and all warm lovely things
For all that loveliness, that warmth, that light,
Blessed Madonna, I go back to fight.

During dinner Lord Wavell suggested that I might like to come riding with him next morning before breakfast. This sounded agreeable, in no sense ominous. I borrowed a pair of slacks and suitable shoes; I thought of using tape for bowyangs to keep my

trousers in place but discarded the idea as too fancy in such circumstances.

We drove some miles from Viceroy's House because, as the Viceroy explained, the horses became sluggish unless their heads were pointed towards home. Sluggish.

We reached the horses in the clear early light, and I was mounted on a tall Australian whaler. 'I have a good horse for you', had said Lord Wavell, 'He comes from your country and is nice and free'.

We set off, four of us including two aides, at a canter increasing to a gallop through the most dreadful terrain I had ever ridden over at anything faster than a walk. It was bare bony gritty red country with small chasms edged with jagged rock opening in our path.

I soon discovered that I had little control over my mount. It was not that he had bolted; he was merely hard to hold. He was having a pleasant run home with a light weight on his back and was happy to increase his distance from the other horses. I had no idea where we were going; we were leading the field and I soon became aware as we swerved to avoid the hazards that my main task was to stay in the saddle.

We came to a chasm that appeared as wide as a brook, but I felt this was no time to swerve and pressed my horse to jump it which he did faultlessly. Then came one of the awful moments of my life, worse even than sitting next to Mr Churchill while he listened at Chequers to Dick's broadcast. A riderless horse shot by me, the Viceroy's horse, hard followed by Simon Astley, his son-in-law.

I dared not look round but when we turned back with the captured horse, to my heavenly relief I saw Lord Wavell coming towards us, his lithe springy walk unimpaired, the walk that was particularly his, that suggested the co-ordinated muscular control of a jungle animal.

He mounted again without comment and I never knew exactly what had happened behind me. We continued at a hunting gallop over the horrible ground. This time he rode by my side, and out of his sensibility commended me for remaining on my horse when it pecked and nearly fell over a rock.

It was a nightmare ride, as I thought later in the morning, sitting at a Red Cross meeting, considering the dreadful possibility that the Viceroy might have been injured, even killed, by the fall.

When I afterwards spoke of this incident to his daughters, they cried, 'Oh, we *never* go riding with him!'

While no doubt there had been previous Governor's Conferences held in New Delhi, there had been no similar meetings for the wives of governors. They had met during the war to discuss certain activities, those of the Red Cross and W.V.S. India, but little of a political nature. This appeared to me an important omission and one that went back a long way. I realised that it was now too late to retrieve a position that had been left to languish for so many years. It seemed to me that much might have been done in the past through governors' wives meeting for the pooling of experience, for forward thinking on the kind of relationship that would exist later between the people of India and the British to which women might have contributed so much. These wives might also have considered bringing Hindu and Muslim women together more frequently in an informal atmosphere where knowledge of each other would have helped to dissipate the bitterness that divided some of them.

Englishmen in the service of the government and in business were generally liked and respected by Indians and friendships were made, but enough responsibility did not seem to have been accepted by their women, the *memsahibs*, in India. It was hard to comprehend how a country as great as England could have remained, in respect of a number of its womenkind, so unaware of the changes taking place in the world or of the need for anyone in a strange continent to seek to understand its people and to be themselves ambassadors and symbols of what was best in their own country. There was little fine tuning.

Some British women, of course, in all fields in India had instinctively brought their warmth and grace into their dealings with human beings of another race. They will be remembered with gratitude and affection.

As for Indian women, while they talked of the future, they were so much concerned with the short-range achievement of independence that they too scarcely thought sufficiently about the next step – what to do when they got it. Clearly we had not helped them enough. But there were many thinking women we did not meet because we were tarred with the government brush and their strong nationalist feelings kept them away from us.

In his three and a half years as Viceroy Lord Wavell could not have failed to impress the Indians he worked with by his integrity, his courage, his capacity to make decisions. He had an imposing presence, a sturdy yet graceful figure, a direct eye and an attractive smile. He was trusted by Indians, but for persons with their characteristics he must have appeared frightening and a little difficult to understand. They are shy and sensitive persons, and a reticent man tends to make us all feel shy and uncertain of ourselves.

Though Lord Wavell was well aware of the closing of an era, the Labour Government in power in 1945 did not consider him the right man to conduct the transference of power from the British, an operation rapidly approaching. He was recalled abruptly from office in March 1947 and replaced as Viceroy by Lord Mountbatten. Once again he went with no show of bitterness.

Lord Wavell had become one of Dick's heroes as he became one of mine. I am not very obedient but if had told me to do something I would have done it at once without pausing to consider whether I would. Both he and Lady Wavell showed us much kindness when we were in India. I had seen her many years before as Queenie Quirk when she had visited Australia with her father and I remembered her young face and curly red-gold hair.

We had known the Mountbattens over a period of time with growing appreciation of their qualities. They were able, energetic, articulate. Both were exceptional public speakers. Because of their interest in human beings, all human beings, they were through experience and natural sensibility more aware than most people of the tides that were gathering strength in many countries. They

grasped the concept of change that could not be held back, could not be denied by looking away from it.

During Lord Mountbatten's brief period as Viceroy and after independence and partition, as Governor-General of India, he and Lady Mountbatten made a great impact on the minds and affections of Indians, who responded particularly to Edwina's interest in them as individuals and to her practical and intelligent approach to their problems. They liked her beauty, her brilliant alert blue eyes, her unselfconscious warmth which put so many human beings at ease.

The Mountbattens became friends of Mr Nehru, Prime Minister of India. In a position of authority it is natural for a man to be lonely. He finds it difficult to talk freely to persons close to him, those of his own race, involved in events. It can be unwise or even dangerous to do so. For Jawaharlal Nehru with his great burdens Edwina was a rare friend, wise, compassionate, objective, almost like someone from another planet yet with affinity of thought and temperament. Like him, she suggested the phoenix. When she died his wings began to droop.

The Rising Tide

When Mr Churchill offered Dick the position of Governor of Bengal he had agreed to the termination of his appointment as soon as possible after the war ended.

In February 1946 Sir Frederick and Lady Burrows arrived in Calcutta to succeed us and we had a week's hand-over. Burrows was to be the last British Governor of Bengal.

It had been the habit for the 'old' Governor to leave his post before his replacement arrived which meant that the new man missed the opportunity for personal discussion on the responsibilities he was to inherit.

On Dick's suggestion the British Prime Minister, Mr Attlee, and the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethwick-Lawrence, agreed that he should remain in Calcutta long enough to acquaint the Governor-designate with the many problems of the problem area of Bengal. Dick listed a hundred matters that his successor would need to know about and together they worked through them all. Food, health, money, racial relations and the possibility of civil disturbance were prominent among them and no subject was left until Dick was satisfied that Sir Frederick Burrows at least knew his mind on it. Dick liked to think that when he left Bengal its problems were less difficult and dangerous than he had found them on his arrival two years before.

We returned to Australia to discover that the words of Field-Marshal Smuts to Dick in Cairo were true. 'When you have been out of your country for a while, for whatever purpose, you will find it hard to go back. You will have to begin again there from the bottom.'

There was no noticeable encouragement for Dick to go back into Australian Federal politics. He took on the task of Federal

President of the Liberal Party, which had been re-formed by Mr Menzies from the United Australia Party. It was not until 1949 that he returned to Canberra as member for the new Victorian electorate of Latrobe. He became Minister for National Development, and Works and Housing, and in 1951 Minister for External Affairs, a portfolio he held until 1960.

His six years away from Australia, in Washington, the Middle East and Bengal were to be of great help to him now. He had met and come to know key men in the international field and had learned something of other countries through working in them. This was particularly useful to him in his association with Hindus and Muslims whose continent was now divided into the independent countries of India and Pakistan. Dick liked and respected the people of Bengal and they had taught him something about the Asian mind, so much more subtle and complex than ours. Neither of us made the mistake of thinking that one Asian country was similar to another. Each had its own origins and history, its characteristics and behaviour and was no more like its neighbours than were the countries of Europe, or a Frenchman like a German.

The disturbances now pressing down on so many parts of the world were not yet flowing as a tide. There was an interlude after the war – an interlude for reparation, for preparation. I remembered that Philip Guedalla had said to us in Cairo, ‘It is to be hoped that we are not fighting so hard in this war in order that the unworthy may inherit the earth’.

In 1951 Winston Churchill became once more Prime Minister of Britain after five years in opposition.

Again in London, we were invited to luncheon with the Churchills at Chequers the week-end they had gone back there.

He had wandered round with delight, greeting remembered friends, the inanimate as well as the animate, the mask of Cromwell, the great picture in the hall of a lion trapped in a net. Low in the left-hand corner a mouse was gnawing its way through one of the ropes of the net. Here during the dark days of the war he had taken his oil paints, mounted a ladder and strengthened up the mouse. Here again he greeted with warmth the house-keeper, Mrs Hill, who had looked after Chequers for so long.

The Rising Tide

We knew that Winston Churchill more than any individual had swung the tide of the war. This tremendous task achieved and well behind him, he was back at last in the house where so many decisions had been made, so much grave action taken.

At luncheon he spoke of Mr Truman, the President of the United States. I realised how much the office, the high office of President, meant to Winston Churchill. For him the man, the individual, became transformed by it. His stature was increased and burnished by the power of the office which Mr Churchill saw in historical perspective and revered.

I asked him what he thought of Aneurin Bevan, that interesting man. He thought for a while and replied, 'I have respect for him'.

No one could be associated if only for moments, with Winston Churchill, this unique creature, like the phoenix the only one of its kind, without being heightened. His personality was so rich in facets, from the tremendous to the disarmingly childlike, that one's own self seemed to grow to a greater dimension in the shade of his light.

The peace treaty with Japan was signed in July 1951 and Australians as others began to adjust themselves to a changed relationship with one of their late enemies. Most thinking persons, however much they had suffered, accepted the fact that life could not be built upon hate.

The Americans were still in charge when we first went to Tokyo, a city quite unlike our idea of it, as unlike as had been our conception of Baghdad. Then and later the vigour of this remarkable people, the Japanese, reminded us of the industry of the Germans after two wars, and wherever we looked we thought of the German cry of *Lebensraum*. Every inch that we saw of the Japanese countryside was cultivated, even to the graveyards.

The ice between our two countries was broken in Australia by the appointment of a Japanese Ambassador to Canberra, Mr Nishi, a wise man who co-operated readily with Dick and handled a delicate position with tact and sincerity.

Malcolm Macdonald, son of Ramsay Macdonald, held the position of British Commissioner General for South East Asia from 1946 until 1955. He lived in the fairy-tale palace of the

Sultan, Bucket Serene in Johore State, and afterwards in Singapore. He was a lively minded imaginative man who had a strong appreciation of the kind of world that had emerged from the second war, restless, apprehensive, racially divided, looking for change.

A new weapon was abroad that increased in power and numbers at a fantastic rate. It was the radio, an instrument through which the human voice spoke all languages to multitudes who could neither read nor write.

We had become aware of the power of the voice during the rise of Hitler when his fervent and hysterical speeches had exercised an almost hypnotic influence upon the youth of Germany. We had heard radio propaganda in the streets of Cairo and Tehran. Thousands of men and women in many countries had listened, sometimes at the peril of their lives, to the voice of Winston Churchill bringing them hope and courage and his own faith in victory.

Voice and the spoken word. The word, clearly stated and anonymous, delivered propaganda and eroding repetition; but the individual voice was able to override even facts by its authority, its power to move the listener and to command him.

Noise, the voice, the word, as they pour from the radio, are spirits we have released from a bottle. They have already touched many millions in the world with their sound and fury and may in the end touch all. By that time, in self-defence like some insects, we may have lost the faculty of hearing.

In the 1950's we travelled from Australia in short visits for Dick to attend United Nations, Colombo Plan, ANZUS, SEATO, ECAFE and other meetings, and for him to learn something of the problem of other countries on their own soil. Situations that are difficult to comprehend at long range appear natural and almost inevitable when one breathes the same air as the people around. While we travelled we carried with us a small radio which talked to us in the language of the country. It was no help in the matter of sense but some indication of what the ears were accustomed to locally. Some of it was very charming. The high metallic bird-like

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sounds made by the people of Saigon in South Vietnam reminded us of those of General Chiang-Kai-Shek in Cairo.

General de Lattre de Tassigny was the French Head of State when we first went to Saigon. He was a fascinating man, tall, stooped, with the head of a noble polichinelle, both tragic and wistful. He spoke with dramatic force. Under his authority South Vietnam was an uneasy land though more stable than it has since become. The General had just lost his son by enemy action.

We returned later for a Colombo Plan Conference when President Ngo dinh Diem was in charge with his sister-in-law Mme Nhu as hostess. She was beautiful, authoritative, charming to the President's guests, overbearing to subordinates.

In New York at the United Nations we were to see the drawing together of the threads of most of the world. We were to recognise the great contributions given by the people of the United States to countries in need: contributions of money, food, technical knowledge and the services of their experts. This aid was given world-wide, without stint, and was of immeasurable help.

In the United Nations Assembly lay the hopes of men. The task was immense. It was complicated by the difficulties facing the new nations which had one by one, in the wake of India and Pakistan, freed themselves, or had been freed, from rule by people of another race. They were in different stages of preparedness for nationhood and were feeling their way under strange conditions, politically, socially, economically. It was not to be expected that they would quickly find stability. We watched the successive representatives of successive governments take their places in the General Assembly.

We thought again of the extraordinary story of Dr Adenauer who after his years in political exile had returned to bring leadership to the people of West Germany. Later had come General de Gaulle, rising once more to lift the people of France.

Dr Adenauer and General de Gaulle – how many years of thought, of diligent preparation, of persistence, had they both given to their countries with faith undiminished?

Tides and Eddies

Human beings depend upon leadership – leadership from courageous men whom other men will follow. There is nothing else that can take its place. Even democracy must have a head.

I was asked to go to London in March 1953 to be one of a jury to judge an international sculpture competition, *The Unknown Political Prisoner*. There were eight men distinguished in the art world on the panel representing countries and continents. I was the only woman.

One of the most interesting features in this, for me, unusual venture was the similarity in thought and material shown by the exhibits from all over the world. Perhaps some measure of this similarity was again due to the influence of the radio which constantly drew attention to current forms of expression in art as well as in literature and music, bringing persons of the same age together in thought, ironing out the unfashionable. Artists were fascinated by the new materials available, metal alloys, wires, plastics, concrete. The conception of sculpture as something solid was fading; it was seen as drawing in space.

On my way back to Australia after this adventure I was to my delight invited to be the guest of the Governments of India and Pakistan. I was a visitor where once for a short time we had been hosts.

In Karachi I stayed with Mr Ghulam Mohammed, Governor-General of Pakistan who had succeeded the Quaid-i-Azam, Mr Jinnah, on his death.

Pakistan had not yet become, like India, a republic within the Commonwealth.

Mr Ghulam Mohammed's daughter Begum Ikbāl Malik was his hostess and spent much of her time with him although she had her own family and home. She was an intelligent, handsome woman with the noble aquiline features that belong particularly to the people of the north west of the Indian continent.

Dick's old friend in Bengal, Kwaja Nazimuddin, now Prime Minister, had been good enough to arrange a dinner party in my honour but there was a political disturbance brewing whose shadow was on the house the day I arrived so I went instead to a

purdah party of twenty women given by Begum Nazimuddin. It took place in an 'Arabian Nights' setting.

I sat, curled up at a long low table beneath a vaulted ceiling, myself a dark note surrounded by graceful women whose glossy hair and brilliant garments and jewels shone under the central light.

Begum Nazimuddin, who had given me a similar party in Calcutta eight years before, was still in purdah though most of her guests were not. When the general shyness wore off our vitality was released and it became a lively evening. There was a great deal to talk about. Much had happened and a new era had been entered. There was work to be done by the women of Pakistan; a glowing enthusiasm was brought to the doing. Again I recognised the vigour of Muslim women.

In New Delhi I stayed at Rastravati Bhavan, once Viceroy's House. It appeared the same and yet different. Many of the old paintings and portraits, historically a part of India, still hung on the walls, but there were additions of new and important Indian faces.

Dr Rajendra Prasad, who had succeeded Lord Mountbatten in what had been the office of Governor-General, was President of the Republic of India. He was on tour when I arrived and though some of his family lived in the widespread house I saw them only in the distance. Looking through the long windows of my bedroom or sitting-room towards the gardens and woods as I had done before I now perceived black-haired figures in groups far away in the hanging gardens. (Once again I stood up on a stool to reach a dress suspended high in the gigantic wardrobe.)

I was taken care of most thoughtfully in New Delhi by two Indian aides-de-camp and a delightful girl, Kamala Jaspal, from the Department of External Affairs was attached to me.

Mr Nehru, Prime Minister of India, invited me to luncheon with him. He lived in a handsome house that had been occupied by General Auchinleck, the last British Commander-in-Chief. The house looked different now; it was simpler, more elegant and the walls were hung with contemporary Indian paintings chosen by Mr Nehru.

His daughter Mrs Indira Gandhi lived with him with her two sons. Her great beauty was unlike that of her aunt Mrs Pandit, who was then President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, nor was the expression of her face like that of her father which was a rare blend of subtlety and radiance. Hers was a powerful distant beauty.

The luncheon was a family affair, the more appreciated and enjoyed by me. Though I was to see Mr Nehru again, the last time some weeks before his death, I carried away with me this day the fairest image of him, immaculate in white with the one note of colour in the rosebud on his coat. He was gay, gentle, willing to talk.

He took me to see his pictures and spoke of the need for women in public life. Mr Nehru was one of the few statesmen who encouraged them to take an active part in politics and civil affairs. When he received a protest after appointing a woman doctor to a district post he told me he had replied, 'I am not sending you a woman. I am sending you a good medical officer'.

We talked with affection of Edwina Mountbatten. She had lately stayed with him in New Delhi to recover from an illness away from the cold of the northern winter, in the sunlight of India.

The seen is never like the imagined. Once more I found the truth of this when we came, I for the first time, to Seoul in South Korea in 1959, a city that was to reveal unexpected treasures.

It was set in an area of natural beauty. From the coast line the city extended on to foothills stepping up towards high serrated mountains that rose against the sky like iron flames. The markets and streets were crowded by people who had an individual cast of face and figure. They were more sturdy than the Vietnamese or even the Japanese and again had touches of carmine in their cheeks.

Most of the gay dresses worn by women were made of silk: shirts with full sleeves and formal collars held at the neck by coloured ribbons and wide brilliant skirts falling from high above the waist. Little was dark except the silky black of their hair. For

the Rising Tide
New Delhi

this reason no doubt my own dress was considered austere. I had myself thought of it as rather elegant. A general impression of me appeared in the daily paper:

“Translated extract from the Korean Daily Report.

(At the Lobby.)

April 1959.

Far from the luxury, like a theologist.

Profile of Mrs. Casey.

“Costumes of Mrs. Casey, who has arrived here accompanying her husband Min. Casey yesterday morning, was so humble that just like to prove a theory of psychoanalists as ‘Extravagance is a shriek that comes from an inferious complex’.

“A brown fur coat, a black handbag in hand and wearing a low-heel, that is favorited only with female theological students in this country we can hardly see any luxurious thing from Mrs. Casey.

“However her high cultures behind the simplicity are bright in her sensible eyes and thus she assists Mr. Casey who is an influent anti-communist diplomat in Australia.

“She is not only an artist but also a female pilot. On the week-end she usually flies in small-sized airplane from Canberra to Sydney with Mr. Casey who also is licensed as a pilot and it was said that they adopted a relieving-system for piloting the plane.

“She presented a news which came from beyond the Equator as she was praising Korean students (most of them are female) in Australia are well received. She said she have kept a chance to meet Korean students. ‘I am very happy to step on a favoured country’ was her saying.

“How about that let us accept a remarkable instructions that one should keep abundant cultural beauty as an accessory than wind luxurious things all over the body from this humble wife of a diplomat.”

The great treasure we were to discover in South Korea was the painting of the phoenix rising from the cinders of its parent. We came to it through a formal garden of dark trees and shrubs, not knowing what we were going to see. The garden lay beneath a sweep of ascending woodland and led to a temple, almost Grecian, that we entered up a flight of steps under a colonnade.

It was a long way from Seoul in South Korea to Heliopolis in Egypt where the unique bird, the phoenix, in its first flight after

birth brought the ashes of its father, its cradle, to lay on the altar of the Sun. When its own time came after a span of centuries it was itself to burn and be resurrected.

Sometimes in my life I had thought to hear the passing movement of its wings, to perceive the shadow of its presence.

Here in Seoul in the temple we walked towards a fresco behind the altar and saw the painted symbol. Here was the phoenix, larger than an eagle, the fabulous purple bird whose tail feathers were crimson and white. Its crest stood erect on its head and its eyes were like stars.

It was taking flight, trailing its tail plumes in an ecstatic upward surge that carried the spirit with it, the hope of the immortality of human beings. How many times had they burned, how many times risen.

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20th December, 1965.

C.W.M.D. Scott, Esq.,
Laidlowsliet,
Clovenfords via Galashiels,
Selkirk.

Dear Mr. Scott,

Lady Casey has asked me to send you an uncorrected proof copy of her second volume of memoirs TIDES AND EDDIES which we shall publish on 24th February.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Joseph

Mrs Michael Joseph.

AJ/JD
Enc.

